

THE  
INSTRUCTION of YOUTH  
IN  
CHRISTIAN PIETY.

TAKEN OUT OF THE  
Sacred Scriptures and Holy Fathers.

From the FRENCH  
OF  
CHARLES GOBINET, D. D.

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V O L. II.

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The FOURTH EDITION.

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*to give subtilty to little ones, to the young man knowledge and understanding. A wise man shall hear, and shall be wiser. Prov. i. 4, 5.*

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MDCCLXXXIII.





A DEDICATORY  
 P R A Y E R  
 TO OUR LORD  
 J E S U S C H R I S T.

**M**Y Lord and my God, permit me also to consecrate to thee this second instruction, and to implore thy blessing upon it. The favour thou hast been pleased to bestow upon the first, gives me hopes that thou hast yet a blessing reserved for this second; and that in consideration of the subjects it treats of, which are thy sacraments, thou wilt not fail to bless it. The whole design of it is to instruct thy children, to teach them to frequent and make a good use of the sacraments which thou hast instituted, as means to convey grace to their souls, and not to despise such rich presents bestowed on them for securing their salvation. We see to our great grief, that few have that esteem for the sacraments which is due to them; and that for want of the knowledge of their excellence, their dignity, and the benefits which from thence arise to us, many either neglect to approach them, or at least do not always take care to bring along with them suitable dispositions. Thou offerest them the sacrament of penance, that thereby they may be freed from the slavery of sin; but, like the Israelites in the Egyptian bondage, they choose rather to continue captives. Thou bestowest upon them celestial food to nourish, and to strengthen them, whom thou hast received into thy favour; but because they are ignorant of the excellence of this gift, they neglect to partake of it, and thus permit their souls to starve in the desert of this mortal life. This bread of angels agrees not with their depraved appetite, that prefers the onions of Egypt before this heavenly Manna. Divine Jesus, open their eyes, who live thus contented in their misery. Make them feel the weight of their chains; make them sensible of the danger of that servitude, wherein they are detained by sin; make them ashamed of serving the Devil, that enemy of thy

thy glory, and their own salvation. Grant them grace to aspire to that liberty, which thy children enjoy: to this end may they embrace the sweet yoke of penance, and thereby be entirely converted to thee, by their actions testifying the sincerity of their hearts. Grant that they may encrease and be strengthened in thy grace by means of this celestial bread: and that by frequently feeding upon thy precious body and blood they may happily pass through the dangers of this life to the land of promise, which is thy heavenly kingdom, where thou livest and reignest eternally.

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T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

**I** HERE present you, Dear Reader, with this second instruction, for the use of young people, and all such as are pleased to make use of it, that they may learn how rightly to employ those two great means of salvation, Penance and the holy Eucharist. I have discoursed already of these two sacraments in the second part of the first instruction : but I did it with that brevity, which is necessary to be observed in matters, treated of only incidentally. Since that time I have observed, that what I then said of them was not enough to convey unto the minds of youth a right knowledge of those two sacraments. Therefore it seemed to me very proper, that they should have a book, whereby they might be solidly instructed in what concerns these two important subjects, which they might make use of with advantage, when, desirous of returning to God by a sincere change of life, they stand in need of making a general Confession of their life past. This book may again be a help if after such a general confession, they are willing to continue in the frequent use of these two sacraments, thereby to preserve the grace of God, and to advance in virtue. This was my motive for undertaking this instruction. In the first four parts of the instruction concerning penance are pointed out the proper means to return to God : The first of which is an exhortation to a change of life, and totally to addict ourselves to virtue. In the second is shewn the way to compass this design, by treating at large of contrition ; of the enormity of sin, and the practice of this great virtue. In the third and fourth are expounded sacramental confession, and satisfaction. In the fifth part are contained the means of preserving the grace, which we have received by this sacrament.

The instruction which follows concerning communion may also serve for the same end. This divine sacrament is one of the chief means, which God has bestowed upon us to preserve us in his grace. Hence it is easy to perceive, that this instruction is not so much a second book, as a continuation or conclusion of the first. I have taken an occasion to intermix some necessary points, which we are obliged to know ; as  
the

*the explication of the principal mysteries of our faith, which I have placed in the first part of the instruction concerning communion, together with the exposition of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, which you will find in the second part of the same instruction: virtues which are the ground-work of our salvation, and upon which, "the house of God, raised by his grace, is built \*." I have also taken occasion to explain the commandments of God in the examen of sins, that persons may find in this book alone the explication of the principal points of Christian doctrine which every one is obliged to know.*

*It is my most earnest wish, Dear Reader, that God will enlighten your soul rightly to understand the truths,\* which he hath comprised in these life-giving sacraments, and that you may draw in abundance from these fountains of salvation the celestial waters of divine grace, which will preserve you in this life from the mortal heats of sin, and, rendering you fruitful in virtue and good works, make you worthy of everlasting life, the reward of pious endeavours.*

\* St. Aug. de verb. Apost.



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T H E  
C O N T E N T S

O F T H E  
Second V O L U M E.

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## INSTRUCTIONS on PENANCE,

## AND ON THE

## Means of returning to GOD by a true Conversion.

I shall divide these instructions into five parts.

The *First* contains an exhortation to him, who is in mortal sin, to return to God by Penance, and a serious amendment of life.

The *Second* treats of contrition, which is the first part of penance; of the motives which may excite it, and of the means to obtain it.

The *Third* treats of confession, and what ought chiefly to be observed therein.

The *Fourth* gives instructions concerning satisfaction, and the works of penance, which ought to be performed for sins past.

In the *Fifth* we speak against a relapse into sin; of its dangerous consequences; and of the means to avoid that dreadful rock, upon which the greatest part of the world are shipwrecked, and unfortunately lost.

## P A R T I.

Containing an exhortation to engage young persons to return to God by penance, and a serious amendment of life.

ALL that we have said in the first part of the instruction of youth, is one continued exhortation to young people to live seriously in their youth, and to correct their lives by penance, if they be already engaged in sin, as it too frequently happens. For this reason it is almost unnecessary to exhort them here to think seriously of their conversion and salvation: it might suffice to refer them to the reading of that first part.

Vol. II.

B

But

But that I may more effectually remove from you, dear *Theotime*, every pretext of delay in a business as important as necessary for your good, I here propose to you an exhortation to repentance expressed in the words of God himself.

## C H A P. I.

*An exhortation, by which God calls upon men, and particularly young people, to return to him by penance.*

**I**T is in the first chapter of the book of *Proverbs*, dictated by the Holy Ghost chiefly for the instruction of young persons where the divine wisdom speaks in this manner. Give ear, *Theotime*, to the voice of God, who addresses himself to you, and comprehend well what he says.

*O children, how long will you love childishness, and fools covet the things, which are hurtful to themselves, and the unwise hate knowledge. Turn ye at my reproof: behold I will utter my spirit to you, and will shew you my words. Because I called, and you refused: I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded. You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock, when that shall come to you, which you feared. When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand: when tribulation and distress shall come upon you: then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear: they shall seek me in the morning and shall not find me: because they have hated instruction and received not the fear of the Lord, nor consented to my counsel, nor despised all my reproof. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices: The turning away of the little ones shall kill them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But he that shall hear me, shall rest without terror, and shall enjoy abundance without fear of evils\*.*

Thus does the Almighty call men to their conversion, and press them to think on their salvation. But I beseech you, *Theotime*, be not satisfied with once reading those sacred words; offer not such an affront to the speech which God himself addresses to you as to pass it over slightly; read it often, till you have perfectly understood it, and deeply imprinted it in your mind and heart. Desist not from reading, until you are resolved to obey, and perform what it requires; and to the end it may make a greater impression, and produce more plentiful fruit in your mind, read these following reflections.

CH.

\* Prov. i. 22, &c.

## C H A P. II.

*Reflections upon the preceding exhortation; and first, on the contents.*

**I**F you consider well this divine exhortation you will find that it contains five parts.

In the *First*, Almighty God, that you may enter into yourself, reproaches you like a tender parent for your blindness, which makes you run after your own destruction; and shews you that you act not like a man, but like a child, like an idiot, like a mad-man.

*Secondly*, He exhorts you with a fatherly goodness to forsake your perverse ways, and return to him by a true conversion.

*Thirdly*, Because you have often resisted his divine admonitions, and the interior motions of his grace, he threatens you with his anger and severest indignation, if you continue to despise his goodness.

*Fourthly*, He foretels the sad misfortunes that shall befall you in punishment of your obduracy: the bare reading whereof is sufficient to make you tremble with dread and apprehension.

Lastly, he opposes to these misfortunes the blessings promised to those who hear his voice, follow his admonitions, and live according to his holy will.

## C H A P. III.

*Second reflection, upon the goodness of God in exhorting us to our conversion.*

**C**Onsider *first*, and weigh attentively, that God, though offended, invites us by repentance and a holy life, is he whom you have most grievously offended, whose friendship you have slighted, whose indignation you have incurred. Through sin you are become an enemy to God, who may justly destroy you for ever. Yet he is the first that invites you to be reconciled to him, and urges you to return to his favour. He himself seeks you, he prevents and exhorts you to return to your duty, but all to no effect!

You cannot find a similar example amongst men, of one who, being offended, goes to meet his enemy and invite him to a reconciliation;



ciliation; yet this example of God himself, who does much more for your sake, does not soften your heart into repentance. Can there be an obduracy like this?

But consider in the *second place*, the exalted dignity of the person who presses your return to his favour; it is no less than that of God himself, who is infinite in greatness, in power and majesty; before whom all the grandeur of the world is but dust and ashes; who makes the powers of heaven and the pillars of the firmament to tremble. This God, so great and powerful humbles himself so far, as to go and meet a wretched creature, an ungrateful and rebellious man, who has forgotten the favours of his creator, despised his commands, and forfeited his friendship; God seeks man even in the bottom of that abyss, into which mortal sin has plunged him, in order to solicit him to come forth, offering his hand to draw him from that depth of misery: yet this hardened wretch shuts his ears, that he may not hear the voice of God who offers his release. This is you yourself, *Theotime*; who treat in this manner Almighty God, when you refuse to obey his voice, who calls you to repentance. If a King should shew such bounty towards a criminal, and the wretch should refuse the favour of his prince, would it not be without example, and would not men say, that he had lost his sense and reason? What ought you not to say and judge of yourself, who act thus in respect of God?

*God invites without interest.* Thirdly, If God received any benefit by your conversion, this might somewhat (though but little) diminish your esteem for that excessive bounty which he manifests by seeking you first.

But the truth is, he can receive no advantage; all that he seeks is your good, and not his own: he will not be more happy if you are saved, nor less blessed if you be damned; God is no less glorified by his justice, than by his mercy. *What doth it profit God*, it is said in the book of Job, *if thou be just? or what dost thou give him if thy way be unspotted* \*. The whole advantage accrues to yourself, not to him; it is your happiness, and not his. Indeed he takes a great pleasure in extending his mercy, and exerting his goodness towards those who do not render themselves unworthy of his favours; notwithstanding which he will rejoice in the punishment of the wicked. *As the Lord*, saith he, *rejoiced upon you before doing good*

\* Job. xxii. 3.



good to you, and multiplying you: so he shall rejoice destroying and bringing you to nought\*.

Must not our obstinacy be desperate, which stands out against so disinterested an invitation to mercy, and continues so long insensible to the concerns of salvation? We may well cry out with St. Jerome, "O the mercy of God and the ingratitude of man! after repeated offences God calls us to repentance, and yet we resist the strongest attempts of mercy for our conversion."

C H A P. IV.

*Third reflection, on the injury those do to God who refuse to be converted, or defer their conversion.*

**A**S the goodness of God to sinners seems not to be able to advance farther than to seek and court their friendship; so the wickedness of man cannot reach to a higher pitch, or do a greater injury to God, than by neglecting and despising the wonderful goodness he manifests on this occasion.

In order to judge of the greatness of this injury, we need but reflect on the behaviour of God to man, and on that of man to God.

The divine goodness makes that condescension to man which man denies to his fellow creature. It may sometimes happen, that the offender begs pardon of the offended, and sues for a reconciliation: then particular reasons may be assigned; either he is inferior to the person offended, or has received former favours, perhaps expects a continuance of them, or dreads some prejudice, and therefore seeks to regain the friendship he has lost. But that a person heinously offended by his inferior, against the strictest ties of humanity and gratitude, and from whom he can never expect a favour, nor fear an injury; (for example, a master, superior, king, or benefactor;) that this person should seek his friendship by whom he had been grievously offended, is what one man never does in regard of another. Yet God does this with respect to man, that is a master to his servant, a king to his subject, a judge to his criminal, and, that I may comprise all in one word, God to his rebellious and ungrateful creature; in this he manifests a goodness and love which are his special attributes. *In this is charity, says St. John, because he first loved us †. Even then, says St. Paul, when we*

B 3

were

\* Deut. xxviii. 63. † 1 Joh. iv. 10.

were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son\*. And how does man behave on this occasion?

You know without doubt, *Theotime*, what his duty is; it is to yield to this affectionate love, and cast himself into the arms of this infinite goodness, which invites him so graciously: but he is amazed at what he does, and what you yourself have so frequently repeated.

This God, whom you have so grievously *A singular affront*. offended, seeks after you first, and exhorts you to return to him, with a gracious offer of pardon. This God, so great and powerful, who has no need of you, invites and entreats you to return to his favour. To him will arise as much glory from your damnation, in punishing you by his justice, as from your salvation, in making you partake of his mercy: yet out of a pure desire of your happiness, he stoops so low as to invite, and urge your conversion, and you will not hearken to him, but refuse, or at least delay being attracted by his love, or doing what he requires of you, although the advantage be all your own. Can there be an affront like this?

*Job* in his afflictions complained, that even his servants did not regard him, but insolently scoffed at the requests he made them. *I called my servant, and he gave me no answer, I entreated him with my own mouth†*. Judge then how justly God may complain of you, whilst you continue in your evil ways, and remain deaf to his remonstrances: will not he have reason to make the same complaint as he did in times past of the *Jews*? *I have spread forth my hands, says he, all the day to an unbelieving people, who walk in a way that is not good after their own thoughts†*. That which a master will not submit to in respect of his servant, who is but a man like himself, God does in regard of you, and you are inflexible; or what is still more, God condescends lower to you than a servant will to his master, by pressing and entreating you to be reconciled, as if he stood in need of your friendship.

## C H A P. V.

*Fourth reflection, upon God's anger against those who refuse to yield to these exhortations.*

THE injury of this refusal being such as I have said, or rather above all that we can think or imagine, it is certain that it is highly

\* Rom. v. 10. † Job xix. 16. † Isai. lxxv. 2.

highly provokes God's anger against those who render themselves guilty thereof: "How great is this injury, and what chastisements ought it not to expect: when man, a vile worm of the earth, is so impudent, as to refuse to hear the voice of his creator\*," who speaks to him in order to his salvation.

This refusal greatly provokes the anger of Almighty God, as it is a contempt of his divine words and admonitions. Of all injuries, contempt is the most insupportable; and of all contempts there is none greater, than that by which one refuses a reconciliation with his sovereign; particularly when he offers it himself, and expresses his desire of it. What must then the like contempt be, when shown to Almighty God himself?

We need but consider this attentively, to perceive how injurious it is to Almighty God, whose indignation it raises against those who render themselves guilty of it.

In the 65th chapter of *Isaias* God numbers up the iniquities of his people, and after reproaching them for their enormous ingratitude, he says, that he will destroy them for all their crimes, and particularly for their contempt of those mild exhortations which he so often made them for their conversion and salvation.

*God's own expression of his anger.*

*And you that have forsaken the Lord, that have forgotten my holy mount, I will number you in the sword; and you shall all fall by slaughter because I called, and you did not answer: I spoke, and you did not hear: and you did evil in my eyes, and you have chosen the things that displease me †.*

In the following chapter he repeats the same menaces, where he says, that as the wicked take a delight in the things that displease him, so he will take a pleasure in bringing upon them all the evils that they feared; and then adds the reason; *Because I called, and there was none that would answer: I have spoken, and they heard not ‡.*

He speaks more effectually in the 7th chapter of the prophet *Jeremy*: *And now, because you have done all these works, saith the Lord; and I have spoken to you rising up early, and speaking, and you have not heard: and I have called you, and you have not answered: I will do to this house, in which my name is called upon and in which you trust, and to the place which I have given you and your fathers, as I did to Silo. And I will cast you away from before my face, as I have cast away all your brethren, the whole seed of Ephraim §.*

B 4

And

\* S. Bernard Serm. 25. de diversis. † *Isai* lxy. 11, 12, ‡ *Isai* lxy. 4. § *Jer.* vii. 13, 14, 15.

And to shew how great his indignation was against that people for slighting his words, and the exhortations which he had so often made them for their conversion, he forbids his prophet to pray for them, and to oppose himself by his prayers to the design he had to punish them, and revenge himself. *Therefore do not thou pray for this people, nor take to thee praise and supplication for them, and do not withstand me: for I will not hear thee* \*.

Could God give a stronger proof of his indignation against those who refuse to be converted, since he will not that others should appease him by their prayers, or endeavour to hinder the execution of his justice?

But if he was thus exasperated against the *Jews*, how can we expect he should be less so against Christians, and against us *Theotime*, who equally condemn his divine grace, and who continue in our disorderly and sinful ways, after so many pressing exhortations to leave them? “For all that God spoke to the people of the *Jews*, ought to be understood of us, if we commit the same faults that the *Jews* did †.

## C H A P. VI.

*Of the great punishment which God inflicts upon those who refuse to defer their conversion.*

**A**L L the passages I have alleged, sufficiently shew the heavy chastisement which God inflicts on those who thus condemn him: the scripture contains many more. But we need not seek farther than in this exhortation of God, which we have spoken of above. Learn from God himself what you ought to fear, and the misfortunes that will befall you, if you resist any longer the desire he has of your salvation.

This punishment is contained in these words. *I will laugh at your destruction, and mock*: words full of terror, which ought to make all those tremble who are in mortal sin. It is for such (according to the advice of St. Gregory †), “to learn hence from the mouth of God himself, in what manner he will punish those whose conversion he has expected a long time, but all in vain.”

By these words God threatens to revenge himself of those at the hour of their death, who continue in their sins; to punish the wicked

\* Jer. vii. 16. † S. Hier. in c. vii. Jerem. ‡ Lib. 18. mor. c. 7.



wicked life with an unfortunate end, and treat them at that last hour, as they have dealt with him during their life. Is not this most just and reasonable? They abandon God during their life, and God abandons them at the hour of their death. They refuse to hearken when he speaks, and press them to their conversion; they are deaf to his admonitions, and will listen to nothing but their own passions, and follow nothing but their pleasures: their whole conduct is a general contempt of God, who by a just but dreadful punishment will act in respect of them as a provoked enemy, who scoffs at his conquered foes, and insults over that excess of misery, to which he sees them reduced.

He will behold them surprised by some dreadful accident, or a mortal illness, which in a small time will carry them off: he will see them trying all means to escape, overwhelmed with grief, troubled with fear and trembling, tormented with the remorse of their guilty consciences, calling to him for succour and deliverance, when it is too late: he will become deaf to their prayers, as they would not give ear to his admonitions: he will not hearken to their desires who were always hardened against his most pressing invitations to mercy: he will not now give them time for repentance, because they refused it when it was in their power. Thus will they find themselves forced to abandon this mortal life, with all the pleasures which they loved, more than either God or their salvation, to be doomed to an eternal death, where for fleeting pleasures they shall feel everlasting torments.

It is thus, *Theotime*, that God shall treat those who contemn his favours, and refuse to hearken to his voice when he invites them to their salvation. And thus does he treat them daily; and that you may better judge of this chastisement of God, take notice of three great evils contained in it.

The first is an unprovided death, which he *The evils of this* threatens to those who in the course of their *punishment.* lives neglected the ordinary means to dispose themselves for it. *When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand.*

The second is an oppression of grief, and anguish in that dreadful surprise; pains of body and sickness, anguish of soul and conscience: *When tribulation and distress shall come upon you.*

The third, which is the most dreadful, is God's forsaking them at their last and frightful extremity; and so utterly does he abandon



don them, that he will never more hearken to their prayers and cries: *Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear.*

All these evils will befall them in punishment of their obstinacy in sin, and refusal to be converted. *Because they have hated instruction, and received not the fear of the Lord.*

I wish this chastisement were as rare as it is terrible, but it too often takes place against those who so repeatedly contemn his holy inspirations.

All Christians who are either dead, or daily die in mortal sin (of whom the multitude is innumerable) are witnesses of this truth; some of that character, are surprised by sickness or unforeseen accidents, wherein they die without the benefit of the sacraments, or receive them without any regular preparation, and in very doubtful dispositions, or if a sufficient time be granted for this preparation, they delay until the last extremity, being more taken up with the apprehension of death, than with the weighty concerns of salvation; others have an opportunity of approaching the sacraments, but are void of a true sorrow, being more grieved for the evils that surround them, than from any motive of true repentance. These, notwithstanding the fairest outward appearances of a conversion, (which ignorant people call *dying well*) find themselves disappointed of that mercy they have so long abused. All these, I say, bear witness to this deplorable truth.

In short, *Theotime*, it cannot be denied but that there are a great number of Christians damned: it is also most certain, that this happens because they have not done true penance for their sins before death. And why have they not done it? Death surprised them in the state of sin, and did not give them time or means to do penance, or at least to perform it as they ought. But how happened it that they were so surprised? unless, by the just judgment of God, whose menaces were executed, wherewith he so often threatened to punish their obdurate hearts, by surprising them when they thought the least of it, and abandoning them at the hour of their death.

They must be extremely deaf, and in a deep lethargy, who are not awakened with these thunder-claps; they must be very insensible, not to fear the dreadful effects of these menaces of Almighty God, which daily befall numbers. Apprehend this greatest of all

misfortunes. That which happens to many may perhaps happen to you; and if it should, you are lost for ever.

## C H A P. VII.

### *The conclusion of this exhortation.*

AS this solemn exhortation comes from God, it is proper also that he himself should conclude it, and that we should learn from him what we ought to resolve and perform, after we have heard his voice that calls us to our salvation. St. Paul exhorts Christians not to be rebellious to the voice of God, and not to imitate the obduracy and rebellion of the *Jews*, which God punished so rigorously: *Wherefore, (as the Holy Ghost saith) To day if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation; in the day of temptation in the desert, where your fathers tempted me\*.*

He goes on, and urges strongly this advice, as well in this chapter as the following; where he shews, that the *Jews* were not rejected by God, but for their incredulity and resistance to his words. *To whom did he swear that they should not enter into his rest: but to them that were incredulous? and we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief†.*

He adds afterwards, how Christians ought to fear the like chastisement: *Let us fear therefore lest the promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should be thought to be wanting.—Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest: lest any man fall into the same example of unbelief‡.*

About the end of this Epistle, he renews this so important an admonition by these words, which ought to be engraved on the hearts of Christians. *See that you refuse not him that speaketh. For if these escaped not who refused him that spoke upon earth; much more shall not we, that turn away from him that speaketh to us from heaven§.*

These admonitions the Apostle gives to all those whom God has so favoured as to call them by his voice to their conversion. Consider them attentively, with the reasons he alledges, and think well on what you have to do. Assure yourself, that it is to you that God addresses himself, when you have heard the above-mentioned pressing exhortation, which he makes with a view to your conversion. Be afraid of falling into the hands of that divine justice, which punished

\* Heb. iii. 7, 8, 9. † Heb. iii. 18, 19. ‡ Heb. iv. 1, 11. § Heb. xii. 25.

punished the obstinacy of the *Jews*. Yield at last to the voice of God, and to the desire he has of your salvation; make now a firm resolution of returning to him by penance, and a perfect change of life; for the effecting which I propose the following means.

## P A R T II.

## Of CONTRITION.

## C H A P. I.

*What we are obliged to do in virtue of the preceding exhortation.*

**W**E read in the *Acts of the Apostles*, that the *Jews* and other inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, having heard the first sermon which St. Peter made them concerning the death and resurrection of the son of God, upon the day of *Pentecost*, were so moved that they immediately desired to know what they should do to be saved. Now when they had heard these things, saith the scripture they had compunction in their heart, and they said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles: What shall we do, men and brethren? But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost\*.

Dear Theotime, if the words, which you have read above, have made that impression on your mind, which they ought, your heart will certainly be softened into compunction, unless you be more hardened than the *Jews*. I cannot believe this of you wherefore, methinks I hear you enquire of me, what must I do that I may obey the voice of God, and become a good and real convert?

To which I answer with the prince of the Apostles, do penance for your sins, and receive the sacrament, not of baptism, which having once received, you cannot repeat, but of penance, to obtain hereby the remission of your sins, and the grace of the Holy Ghost, which will assist you to lead a new life. Let us betake ourselves to holy penance, which is a second baptism, a baptism of tears and sorrow, to cleanse therewith all our sins. "Let us wash our consciences with tears, who have defiled our lives by sin †. Let us weep in the sight of God our creator, and cast ourselves into the arms of our heavenly Father, whilst yet he has them open to receive

\* Acts ii. 37, 38. † S. Ambros.

give us, and so lovingly calls us to him. Let us not delay, lest he may shut them in punishment of our incredulity: Let us prevent his anger by having recourse to his mercy. *Let us go therefore with confidence, faith that divine Apostle, to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid* \*.

## C H A P. II.

### *What penance is.*

SINCE we cannot return to God after sin by any other way, than that of penance; it is of the last importance to know what this is, without which we cannot be saved. *Except you be penitent, you shall all likewise perish* †.

This penance which is so necessary may be considered two ways: as a virtue, and as a sacrament, for it includes both these excellent qualities.

1. It is one of the Christian virtues, which has for its object and end the destruction of sin in him who has committed it, and the satisfaction of the divine justice by sorrow and good works.

2. It is also one of the seven sacraments of the new law, being raised to that dignity by *Jesus Christ*, when he gave to his Apostles and their successors power to forgive sins.

As a virtue, divines define it thus. A virtue *Penance as a*  
or gift of God, which makes us deplore and *virtue.*

hate the sins which we have committed, with a  
purpose to repair past faults, and never to offend in future.

Its principal acts are *Confession*, *Contrition*, and *Satisfaction*.

*Confession* is a declaration or acknowledgment that we have sinned before God, by which we own ourselves guilty, and worthy of punishment: it being certain, that the first step necessary to obtain pardon for a fault, is to acknowledge it, and declare ourselves guilty. It was for this reason that *David* said, that he had confessed his sins before God, and had obtained pardon ‡.

*Contrition* is a regret or sorrow for having offended God; acknowledging the crime is not sufficient to obtain pardon, except we also testify a regret and displeasure of heart, without which it is impossible to obtain it.

*Satisfaction* is a punishment voluntarily suffered to compensate the injury done to divine justice, which, in pardoning sin, obliges the

\* Heb. iv. 16. † Luke xiii. 3. ‡ Psalm xxxi. 5.



the penitent to undergo a temporal punishment. "Hence he who does penance, ought to offer himself to endure, and to be chastised by God, in this life, that he may avoid eternal punishment\*." St. *Augustine* begged of God, that he would be pleased to chastise him in this world, so that he would pardon him in the next. "Here burn, here cut; so that thou spare hereafter."

As these three acts compose the virtue of penance, they also make up the parts of the sacrament, which *Jesus Christ* has instituted upon this virtue. The words of this institution are these, spoke, to his Apostles on the day of his resurrection *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained*†.

By these words he has given power to the Apostles and their successors to remit and to retain the sins of the faithful; and by necessary consequence he obliged the faithful, who should fall into sin, to put themselves in a state fit to receive that remission, and to have those dispositions without which a sin cannot be pardoned either by God or men, which are *confession*, *contrition*, and *satisfaction*. *Confession*, by which the delinquents declare their sins to him who has power to judge, to wit, the priest; because a judge cannot pass sentence upon a crime, if he know it not, or it be not brought before him to judge; *contrition*, because a sin cannot be remitted to him who does not declare his sorrow before the judge; and *satisfaction*, because to receive a remission, one must be disposed to receive it upon the conditions that shall please him who gives it, and with that reasonable chastisement that he shall think proper to impose. So these three acts, serving as dispositions for the remission of sin, serve also for the matter of the judgment, which the priest makes of the same sin, and of the absolution he pronounces by virtue of the power which *Jesus Christ* has given him.

These two things joined together, viz. the acts of the penitent and the absolution of the priest, constitute the sacrament which we call penance; whereof these acts are the matter, and absolution the form, which are the two parts necessary for a sacrament.

Behold, *Theotime*, what penance is. It is necessary that you should preserve in your mind this idea, and the distinction now made, as the ground-work of all we shall say on this subject: because to effect the true conversion, of which we are here speaking

penance

\* S. Ambros. in Psalm xxxvii.

† Joh. xx. 22, 23.

penance is requisite both as a virtue, and as a sacrament. The sacrament is necessary, because by it we receive the forgiveness of our sins. The acts of this same virtue are likewise necessary before the sacrament, to dispose one to receive it; and after having received it, to satisfy God, and preserve one's self in grace.

### C H A P. III.

*What contrition is.*

IN treating of the acts or parts of penance, I begin with contrition, as being the most necessary; for without it the others are of no value, and it may supply their want in case of necessity, on condition that it include the will to confess, and satisfy when we are able. Wherefore read attentively what follows.

The council of *Trent* gives us a perfect idea of this great action, when it defines it to be *Contrition defined.*  
 "A grief of mind, and a detestation of sin  
 "committed, accompanied with a resolution  
 "not to commit it any more\*."

It is a *grief of mind*, that is, a regret and interior displeasure, which is conceived in the heart for having offended God. And a *detestation*, by which word is meant a hatred and an aversion which one has to sin, in looking on it as a wicked thing, and as the mortal enemy to our salvation and the glory of God. *With a resolution not to sin any more.* This is a necessary consequence of the grief and hatred of sin. For he who has a regret for an evil, and truly detests it, has also a will to avoid it; if he has not this will, it is certain he has neither sorrow nor aversion.

By this definition you see that *contrition* is, *Contrition composed of three interior acts, a sorrow, a detestation, and a good purpose. Detestation is the first act and the ground-work, on which are raised the other two.* For he who conceives in his heart a hatred against sin, has a sorrow for having committed it, and a purpose not to commit it any more. So that we must chiefly apply ourselves to form this detestation of sin.

That we may arrive at this, we must understand the malice of sin: for we only hate and detest those things we know to be evil.

There

\* Con. Trid. Sess. 14. c. 4.

There are in sin two evils, the evil of the *Two evils in sin.* *fault*, and the evil of the *punishment*. The first is the *injury*, which by sin is done to God. The other is the *hurt*, which the same sin draws upon us in punishment of the injury done to God. The one regards God, the other our salvation: both of them render sin infinitely detestable. The evil of the *fault*, because it offends God, and the evil of the *pain*, by the mischief it brings upon us, the loss of God's grace, and the incurring of eternal damnation.

Indeed, *Theotime*, can any thing be more detestable, or create in us a greater horror, than the cause which produces these two evils? Sin offends God so highly, and is such an injury done to him, that men and Angels together are not able to comprehend how heinous it is. Is there any evil more heinous and detestable? By the injury it does to God, it separates us from him, causes us to lose his grace, excludes us for ever from his glory, and renders us obnoxious to everlasting misery: can we speak, or think of an evil more dreadful, and which deserves more our hatred and detestation?

Let us go farther, and consider sin not only in general, and as it is in others; but as it is within ourselves, and say to our own hearts, by sin I have offended my creator, my redeemer, my benefactor, my all: a God, infinite in greatness, in goodness, in holiness; without cause, without reason; only through my malice and blindness: why then have I not a horror of myself, and of the evils I have done?

By the same sins I have lost the grace of God, I am become his enemy, I am deprived of heaven, I am fallen into the slavery of the Devil, and made a victim of hell. O sin, how horrid art thou! O sin, why have I committed thee! O sin, I hate and detest thee with all my heart, and above any thing that is detestable in the world. *I have hated and abhorred iniquity* \*.

#### C H A P. IV.

*Of the qualities, or conditions, which true contrition ought to have.*  
**W**E speak not here of perfect contrition (whereof we shall treat in the following chapter) but more generally of the conditions which grief, necessary for obtaining the remission of sin, ought to have, whether it be perfect, or imperfect; and I

this *contrition* must have four qualities, it must be *interior, supernatural, universal, and sovereign*: take notice of these qualities, for they are of great importance, and many are deceived herein.

1. *Contrition*, or sorrow for sin, ought to be *interior*, that is to say, from the heart; when it is only in words and outward appearance, it is not *contrition*, but an illusion: the heart must sincerely produce the sentiment and sorrow which the words express: for this reason the council said above, that it was a *sorrow of mind*, and a detestation of sin: now this detestation is an act of the will. The scripture says, that it is a conversion, that is, a return of the heart to God: *Be converted to me with all your heart\**. That we must seek God by penance, and in seeking we shall find him; *Yet if thou seek him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul†*. God rejects the repentance of the *Jews*, who rent their garments, as exterior demonstrations of their sorrow, which never reached the heart. *Be converted to me*, said God to them, *with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments‡*.

Indeed there is nothing more manifest both from scripture and reason, than that repentance ought to be in the heart, that is, in the will: that as the will was the cause of sin, so also it may be the cause of sorrow, and produce repentance. The heart must revoke the evil, which it has wilfully committed, and detest sin, which was formerly the object of its affection.

2. It is not sufficient to detest sin in the heart; it must also be detested upon a good motive, that is, upon a motive sufficient to obtain pardon for the sin. This motive, that it may produce that effect, must be *supernatural*, that is, one of those which God has revealed, and which we know by faith: because an action purely natural cannot deserve the sanctification of the soul, which is wrought by grace, and is a thing above nature. Hence we assigned the second quality of *contrition* to be supernatural, that is, conceived upon a supernatural motive, and consequently by a motion inspired by God.

These supernatural motives have relation to two heads, viz. to that which concerns our supernatural good, which is eternal happiness; and to that which regards the glory of God. I say, our supernatural good; because the natural goods, as life, health, Vol. II. C honour,

\* Joel ii. 12. † Duet. iv. 29. ‡ Joel. ii. 12, 13.



honour, riches, are not able to raise such a sorrow for sin, as will obtain pardon from God. This we must take notice of: such was the sorrow of *Saul*, who did not grieve for his sin, but for the loss of his kingdom, which he saw God would deprive him of. Such was the sorrow of *Antiochus*, who did not weep for his crimes, but the great misfortunes with which he found himself overwhelmed. Such many times is the grief of Christians who crave pardon for their sins, when they are surrounded with afflictions, that affect them more sensibly than the evil they have committed by their sins, which moves them little or nothing. It is very true, that afflictions make us return to God, and he sends them for that effect: but there is a great deal of difference between the occasion which makes us do an action, and the motive for which it is performed. Afflictions serve as an occasion to return to God, because they awake us from the sleep of sin, make us enter into ourselves, be sorry for the crimes that caused them, and have recourse to God for our deliverance: but they ought not to serve as a motive to detest our sins; because that would be only pure natural sorrow, which avails nothing towards restoring us to the grace of God. We must have a nobler motive, and return to God by afflictions, detest our sins, by reason of the danger which they exposed our eternal salvation; or, which is a better motive, because they have infinitely offended the honour of God.

3. We have said, that *contrition* must not be only supernatural, but also *sovereign*, that is, it does not suffice to detest sin upon a supernatural motive, but this motive should surpass all others that come into our mind, and hold the chief place: so that we should rather detest sin, by reason of the damage it brings to our salvation, or the injury done to God, than for any natural evils it may produce, and be resolved to suffer them all, rather than commit one mortal sin.

Because sin is the sovereign and the greatest of all evils. For if we consider the offence, there is none more heinous; and if we consider the punishment, there is none more dreadful. This is the reason why we cannot detest it sufficiently, but by detesting it above all natural misfortunes.

*Remark.*

Herein yet we must mark well, that this greater detestation does not consist in being more sensible, more lively, or more vehement than

than the hate and detestation of other evils, because that is not necessary, nor always in our power: but this is to be understood of the notion or judgment which we make of sin, accounting it really the greatest of all evils, as in effect it is, and detesting it in this view above all others, and purposing firmly not to commit it any more upon any account whatsoever.

We are yet to observe, that to have that detestation of sin above all evils in our heart, it is not at all necessary that every evil in particular should be considered, as death, torments, infamy, and the like; but it suffices that they should be proposed in general. Indeed it is not advisable to propose them separately, lest their representation should make the mind either to waver in its resolutions, or to make them with such rashness and presumption, as would be forgotten on the first arising temptation, as it happened to St. Peter. It is sufficient to think sin the greatest of all evils which can ever befall us; to hate and detest it, as such; to make a resolution not to commit it any more, whatever misfortune may happen to us; trusting in the mercy of God, and hoping he will either free us from those mischiefs, or that he will give us strength to support them by his grace, rather than offend him.

*Observe.*

4. The fourth quality of *contrition* is, that it must be universal in respect of all mortal sins, that is, we must detest all, without excepting any; with a resolution never more to commit any one mortal sin. The Holy Ghost pointed out this quality, when he said, that we must do penance for all the sins we have committed. *If the wicked do penance for all his sins, living he shall live and shall not die* \*. We must convert ourselves to God with all our hearts, that is, the heart must be wholly offered to God, and not divided, so as to give one part to God, and the other to sin. *Their heart, says he elsewhere, is divided, now they shall perish* †. The reason is evident, because mortal sins cannot be remitted but all together, since man cannot reserve in his heart an affection to any one mortal sin, but he will of necessity incur the hatred and displeasure of God. The *contrition* therefore, which one may think he has for other sins, cannot justify him in the sight of God, as it is false and imaginary; because if he really hates any, he hates all sins, there not being any one which does not incur damnation, and infinitely offend God.

*Fourth quality.*

C 2

Hence

\* Ezéch. xviii. 21. † Os. x. 2.

Hence it is, that those deceive themselves who pretend to repentance, and yet refuse to pardon injuries, or to be reconciled to their enemies; those also who will not restore the goods they have unjustly gotten, and those who persist in the immediate occasions of sin, and such like: in a word, all those who have any wilful attachment to any particular mortal sin, which yet they are not fully resolved to break, are not true penitents.

## C H A P. V.

### *Of perfect and imperfect contrition.*

**T**HIS distinction is grounded upon what we said above of the two sorts of evils which are found in sin, to wit, the injury done to God, and the damage brought on our own souls.

When we hate sin, by reason of the supernatural goods which it deprives us of, as the grace of God and eternal life; or because of the punishment it draws upon us from Almighty God, it is an act of *contrition*, but an imperfect one, because we consider nothing but our own interest; and this act is called *attrition*.

But when besides this motive we raise our thoughts higher, and hate sin as being an affront to the supreme goodness of God, who deserves to be loved above all things, even more than ourselves, and whom we are obliged to love, although there were neither a heaven nor a hell; it is an act of perfect *contrition*, which proceeds from *charity*, and the pure *love of God*.

In either kind of contrition, there is a *fear* and *love* of God, but differently. For in *attrition* there is a servile fear, dreading punishment; and an imperfect love, which makes us only regard God as the author of our salvation, and love him for our own advantage. In *contrition* there is a filial fear, and a perfect love of charity; which makes us more concerned for the honour of God than our own welfare.

By the one and the other we hate sin; but by the first we hate principally the punishment of sin, and fear that more than the fault or offence of God. By the second we detest principally the offence of God, and fear that more than the punishment.

*Remark.*

But here we must take notice of a point of great concern: when we say, that in *attrition* we fear *more* the pain than the offence; this

*more*

*more*, or this excess, is not to be understood of a positive preference or esteem, by comparing the punishment with the offence. For he who, weighing these two together, should say, either expressly or tacitly, that he fears *more* to be damned than to offend God, would commit a mortal sin; but this is to be understood only of, as we may call it, a negative, or abstractive preference; as for instance, when one thinks of the punishment of sin, without reflecting on the offence of God, which occurs not to his mind; and, not thinking of it, he stops as it were only at the punishment which occurs, as being more sensible, and conceives a horror of sin, and detests it upon that account, without rising higher, or thinking of the offence.

But if it chance that any one think expressly both of the *punishment* of sin, and the *injury* which thereby is done to God, comparing the one with the other; such a person would be obliged to detest them both, according to their merits, that is, the offence more than the punishment. I say *more*, not as to the greatness, or vehemency of the fear and detestation, but as to the preference which the will conceives of the one above the other, that is, detesting the offence more than the punishment.

In practice, *Theotime*, we should always endeavour to have them both; for to content ourselves only with imperfect *contrition*, is the

*Practice.*

part of a mean spirit, and a token of a servile and mercenary soul; besides it would be apt to raise doubts of conscience; because it must be very difficult to confine one's self to an imperfect *contrition*, grounded only on a motive of fear, without openly preferring our own interest to that of God, and our salvation to his glory. On the other side, an act of perfect *contrition* is an act of the highest perfection, and to perform it is a very difficult thing; it is not usual, neither can we, ordinarily speaking, ascend at one step to the highest and most perfect acts of a virtue: wherefore we must begin with those of the lower rank, and by them mount up to those of an higher class; as nature herself teacheth us in all her productions. But observe, it frequently happens, that we are deceived on this occasion; for many are persuaded that they have perfect *contrition*, as soon as they have pronounced these words, *I detest my sins, because God is infinitely good*. But there is a great difference between saying these words, and conceiving in our heart their true sense.



First then, *Theotime*, begin with imperfect *contrition*; and after having considered the great and dreadful mischiefs which are the effects of sin, as the loss of the grace of God, the loss of heaven and the incurring of eternal damnation, proceed to hate and detest it with all your heart, as our most mortal enemy; and love God as the author of your justification, who is able to deliver you from such a wretched state, and restore to you what you have lost. Next raising your mind, and considering that sin must needs be a horrible evil in itself, and strangely offensive to the divine bounty, since he punishes it with so much rigour, go on to the hatred of sin itself, by reason of the injury it does to God: An injury which derives its enormity from the supreme, the infinite bounty, sanctity and majesty of God, whom it infinitely offends, and consequently becomes infinitely detestable, and which ought to be hated and detested with a supreme, and, if possible, infinite hatred, although there were neither a heaven it could deprive us of, nor a hell to punish it. See more of this Chap. XII.

## C H A P. VI.

*Of the means to obtain contrition.*

**I**F it were the same thing to have *contrition*, as to know it, there would be nothing more required, than what we have said, to attain it. But it is far otherwise, *Theotime*. This great and important action is not so easy as they imagine, who believe they have power to produce it every moment. It is a fruit which comes from heaven; it is a plant which our earth, now become dry and barren through sin, cannot bring forth, except it be watered from above, and prepared by the blessing or grace of God. *The Lord*, says the Prophet, *will give goodness: and our earth, that is, our hearts, shall yield her fruit\**.

It is not so easy to clear one's self of sin, as to fall into it. A man may quickly cast himself into a deep pit by his own fault; but he cannot get out without trouble, and the assistance of another. We sin by our own free will alone, but by this alone we cannot free ourselves from sin, unless the grace of God withdraw us from it. *Destruction is thy own, O Israel: thy help is only in me†*. This is an article of faith which has always been believed

\* Psalm lxxxiv. 13.    † Of. xiii. 9.

believed in the church, and which the council of *Trent* has defined anew. "If any one says, that without the preventing inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and his succour, a man can believe, hope, love, or be sorry for his sins, as is necessary to receive justifying grace, let him be anathematized\*."

With what fear and trembling ought not those souls to be seized, whose conscience tells them, that they are in the unfortunate state of mortal sin? When they reflect that their salvation depends upon God alone, and that they cannot of themselves escape the danger they are in, except they be withdrawn by his hand, whom they are so grievously offended, and who is their professed enemy, while they continue in that state?

What ought still to encrease their fear, is, that there is nothing due to them from God, as long as they remain his enemies by sin, that he is not obliged to relieve them, having never promised it to any one; but that he may most justly leave them in that condition; because as St. *Augustine* says, "God who has promised pardon to him that shall do penance, has not promised penance to any one." What reasons then for fear and trembling, to see one's self in so deplorable a state, wherein he may be justly abandoned by God, and left a prey to the enemies of his salvation! What ought he to do, who considers himself in this danger? Or rather, what ought he not to do, to prevent the misfortunes which environ him at present, and avoid the eternal loss of his soul, which threatens him hereafter? He should certainly seek all means possible of appeasing God, and regaining his favour, which cannot otherwise effected, than by ceasing to offend him, by performing acts of condign penance, and by pouring forth his soul in prayer, that he may obtain the grace of holy *contrition*.

In putting these methods in practice he should apply himself to consider the evil he has committed, meditate upon such motives which will imprint in his soul an horror of sin; then propose to himself the examples of true penitents, imitate them in their repentance, and conquer heaven by the force of tears and *contrition*, as they have done.

\* Conc. Trid. Sess. 6. Canon. 3.

## C H A P. VII.

*Of the means to obtain contrition, which are, avoiding sin, doing works of penance, and prayer.*

**I** Join these three means together, because they are so inseparable that they seem to make but one.

The first is to cease from offending God.  
*First, avoid sin.* for how can you expect from him the spirit of contrition, or the holy virtue of penance, while you persist actually in offending him, and resisting his grace? how can you conceive a true sorrow and detestation of sin, in your heart, when you take pleasure in committing it? Sin banishes pious thoughts and holy inspirations, and disperses and renders fruitless the rains of those heavenly graces, which God mercifully showers down upon men, even whilst they are his enemies, as blasting north wind, by its cold and dryness, scatters the clouds, disperses the rain, and parches up the earth. *The north wind driveth away rain\**. As on the contrary, the fear of God's judgments, which seizes upon sinners, is like the favourable south wind, which gathers the clouds, and pours rain upon the earth: this fear breathes into the soul the thoughts of repentance; it moves us to conceive a true sorrow for our sins, and perfect contrition.

The second means is the practice of self-denial, and a general mortification. Next  
*Secondly, do penance.* sin, there is nothing more opposite to contrition (which is the fruit of sorrow) than a life of pleasure. Contrition is not found but in grief and affliction, which the heart, diverted by pleasure, is incapable. *Job*, speaking of wisdom, says, it is not found in the houses of them that live in delight†. Much less can contrition, which is the beginning of wisdom, and the fruit of an afflicted heart ruminating on sin and the bitterness of soul, be found amongst diversions and pleasures. Wherefore he who resolves to be penitent and contrite ought to banish far from his thoughts, diversions and pleasures. This is properly the work of penance, which must be accompanied with fasting and alms-deeds.

The third necessary means is Prayer, because  
*Thirdly, pray.* contrition is a gift of God, which is not due to us, but proceeds from his pure bounty; we have, therefore, great need to beg it of him very earnestly, and know

\* Prov. xxv. 23. † Job xxviii. 13.

knowledging our own misery and the absolute dependence we have upon his mercy. Here we must enter into and humble ourselves before God, from a conviction of that wretchedness to which sin has exposed us in the prayer of the Prophet *Jeremias*: I am the man that see my poverty by the rod of his indignation\*. It is true, O my God, I acknowledge the extreme misery, to which thy anger has justly reduced me. I am now in the darkness of sin, instead of the light of thy grace, which I formerly enjoyed. Thou hast turned thy hand against me; thou has taken away all my strength, and overwhelmed me with bitterness and affliction; my life is fallen into an abyfs, out of which I cannot escape. Considering myself in this state, I said, I was lost: but I had recourse to thee, O my God, I invoked thy holy name from the depth of my misery. Thou hast graciously hearkened to me. Do not turn away thine ears from the sighs which flow from my heart, from the cries which I make to obtain thy mercy.

C H A P. VIII.

*Of the motives of contrition, and first of the grievousness of sin.*

**W**HEN you implore *contrition* of God by prayer, and works of penance, you must endeavour on your part to weigh attentively the motives, which are capable of raising this sorrow in your heart, and to meditate upon the grievousness of sin, and the reasons which may move you to an horror and detestation of it. This method is absolutely necessary for him, who desires to be truly converted; though it be little practised, as God himself complains: *There is none*, says he, *that doth penance for his sin, saying: What have I done†?*

Do you it at least, as you ought, dear *Theotime*, and with all the attention of your heart, whilst you read what I shall here propose concerning the grievousness of sin, and beg of God, that he will make you comprehend this so important a subject, which without his grace you will never rightly understand.

You must then suppose, that the grievousness of sin is so great, that it is incomprehensible; this truth alone may make you judge of the greatness of it. To comprehend this grievousness, you should have a true definition of sin, perfectly explaining its nature; but this is impossible. The sovereign good, which

*The grievousness of sin incomprehensible.*

\* Lament. iii. 1. † Jer. viii. 6.



which is God, cannot be defined, because it is infinite; neither can sin, which is the sovereign evil. God is infinite in goodness; sin is infinite in malice: God possesses all perfections; sin contains all wickedness. No created spirit can comprehend the greatness, goodness and perfections of God; so none but God can understand the grievousness, malice, and evils found in sin.

The reason is very evident, because to understand well the grievousness of sin, and the injury it does to God, we must know how great, how holy, how good, how perfect God is, in as much as sin derives its enormity from the opposition it has to the greatness, goodness, and holiness of God. To know the greatness of an offence, we must know the greatness and dignity of the person offended. For this reason, to comprehend the grievousness of sin and the injury it does to God, we must measure the greatness of God; but where is the measure of this height of all perfection? We can never find it, so neither can we fathom the abyss of sin. *Who hath measured, saith Ecclesiasticus, the height of heaven, and the depth of the abyss\**? Much less can the greatness of God and the grievousness of sin be measured. If God be so high in dignity and majesty, that no created spirit can reach him, sin is so deep in malice and unworthiness, that it is impossible to comprehend it.

We must not despair of producing an act of *contrition*, although we cannot fully conceive the grievousness of sin. For in saying we cannot comprehend its grievousness, there is the strongest reason for abhorring it, and lamenting if we be so unfortunate as to fall into it. Sin then is so great an evil, that no created spirit can fully conceive its enormity; that to understand it, we must know God clearly face to face, since only God himself can fully comprehend it. What horror, what detestation ought we not to have for so great an evil? and what sorrow ought we to have, to see ourselves, by our own rebellious will, become guilty of it?

Ponder this well, *Theotime*, pass it not over in haste, for it is very moving. I say again, there is nothing that can make us hate sin more than to know that we cannot comprehend its grievousness; it is easy to prove this by a contrary but very evident reason, *viz.* that there is nothing more powerful to raise in us a love and respect towards God, than when we are fully persuaded, that he is so great, so perfect, and so amiable, that his greatness and perfections do infinitely surpass all that we can conceive of him. Let us apply the same to the grievousness of sin, and the evils which

it

\* Eccli. i. 2.

it includes, and we shall find how detestable it is. O sin! Is it true then that thou art so great, that I cannot comprehend the heinousness of the injury thou dost to God? and not only I, but all men and angels together? If thy enormity be so prodigious, how can I but hate thee? Is not this sufficient to move me to a horror of thee, to know thou infinitely offendeſt a divine majeſty? O monſter of wickedneſs! he muſt needs be blind who is fond of thee; O abyſs of miſfortune! how ought I to fear, leſt I ſhould fall into thy precipices!

## CHAP. IX.

*Continuation of the ſame ſubject, the grievouſneſs of ſin.*

LET us however attempt to gather ſome knowledge at leaſt of the grievouſneſs of mortal ſin; and although we cannot comprehend it, as it is in itſelf, let us learn what the Holy Ghoſt has been pleaſed to let us know by the ſacred ſcripture. Read, *Theſe things*, and be attentive.

### *What is ſin?*

It is a rebellion of the creature againſt his Creator; a reſiſtance againſt his commandments, by which it reſuſes to obey him, and be ſubject to his holy will. This is what we learn from that bitter reproach, which God makes to finners by *Jeremias*. *Of old time thou haſt broken my yoke, thou haſt burſt my bands*, (that is, all the conſiderations which kept thee tied to my ſervice) *and thou ſaiſt: I will not ſerve* \*. Behold what ſin is, and what you have committed, as often as you have mortally offended God. Conſider well this definition; but this is not all.

### *What is ſin?*

It is a baſe ingratitude committed againſt God, and a forgetfulneſs of all his favours. Who is it that ſays this? it is he himſelf by his prophet. *I have brought up children, and exalted them: but they have deſpiſed me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib: but Iſrael hath not known me, and my people hath not underſtood* †. And in another place, *The beloved grew fat*, (that is, he hath enjoyed abundantly the goods which I have ſent him) *and kicked:*

\* Jer. ii. 20. † If. i. 2, 3.

kicked: he forsook God who made him, and departed from God his Saviour\*.

*What is sin?*

It is a contempt of God, and his commandments, by which one openly disregards his greatness, power, promises, or threats. *I have brought up children, but they have despised me†.* By another prophet he complains, *As a woman that despiseth her lover, so hath the house of Israel despised me‡.* By another he says, *She hath despised my judgments, so as to be more wicked than the Gentiles; and my commandments, more than the countries that are round about her. For they have cast off my judgment, and have not walked in my commandments§.* And by another prophet he reproaches sinners with their contempt: *The son honoureth the father, and the servant his master; if then I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear¶?*

*What is sin?*

It is an injury done to God in his own person, and before his face, without respect to his greatness and sanctity. *What is the meaning that my beloved hath wrought much wickedness in my house? For Jerusalem is ruined, and Juda is fallen: because their tongue, and their devices are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his majesty\*\*.*

*What is sin?*

It is a revolting from God, and a renouncing of his friendship and grace, to follow one's own will, passions, pleasure, interest, and the like. For this reason divines, after a serious consideration of the nature of sin, have thought, that they could not explain better, than by saying it was a turning away from God, and a turning to the creature. Behold, what is done by sin! Harken to the judgment and complaint of God himself. *Be astonished,* says he, *ye heavens at this, and ye gates thereof be very desolate. For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me the fountain of living water (that is, the source of all good) and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water††.* The meaning is, that he who sins, seeks his good and happiness in creatures, where he shall never find it. What greater blindness than this? S

\* Deut. xxxii. 15. † Is. i. 2. ‡ Jer. iii. 20. § Ezech. v. 6. ¶ Is. i. 6. || Jer. xi. 15. \*\* Isai. iii. 8. †† Jer. ii. 14. 13.

what they do, who offend God mortally; it is in this preference which we give the creature before God himself, wherein the grievousness of mortal sin consists. For as the love of God above all things consists in preferring him above all, that is, before one's own will, passions, pleasures, honour, and interest: so mortal sin, which is directly opposite to charity, consists in preferring all these things, or any of them before God, and choosing rather to lose the friendship of God, than deprive one's self of these deceitful goods which he has forbidden. And he who resolves to commit a mortal sin, in effect places on one side the greatness of God, his favours, his promises, and menaces; and on the other side his own passions, pleasures, honours, or riches: and having compared these, so opposite objects together, says within himself; I make more account of these imaginary goods, than of the greatness of God, his friendship, his promises, and threats; all which, I renounce to gratify my passions, my pleasure, my ambition, my avarice, &c. Consider this well, *Theotime*, that you may comprehend something of the grievousness of sin, and the mischief you have brought on yourself, when you were so blind as to fall into it.

## CHAPTER X.

### *Another demonstration of the grievousness of sin.*

WHAT has been said is more than enough to form a judgment of the heinousness of mortal sin; but because the more we sink into the matter, the more copious is the subject. behold yet one more consideration to discover its enormity. Sin is a resistance against the divine will, or, as St. *Ambrose* has very well defined it, "it is a swerving from the law of God, and a disobedience to his divine commandments." This disobedience offends God, and injures him so as to violate the right which God is to be obeyed and loved by his creatures. It is also necessarily accompanied with all those indignities, which we have said are found in sin, *viz.* rebellion against God, ingratitude, contempt, an insult offered to his adorable presence, and a preference of the creature before God, a renouncing of his friendship, and many other indignities: all which aggravating circumstances demonstrate the greatness of the injury done to God.

And



And since this vile and base injury is offered to a person the most eminent and of the highest dignity, whose authority is boundless and infinitely raised above all that is great; hence it is, that this affront infinitely surpasses all the abuses and wrongs that can be offered to man; it being a certain rule in morality that an offence derives its enormity from the greatness of the person that is offended. Thus an affront offered to a prince is more heinous than that offered to one of base condition. Now God being infinite in greatness and majesty, an injury offered to him is also boundless in its malice and infinite, because the person offended is infinite.

Sum up all these aggravations together; an infinite offence committed against the infinite greatness of God, accompanied with rebellion, ingratitude, contempt of God and his friendship, and infidelity; then judge what we ought to say of the greatness of the injury sin offers to God; especially when we consider it committed by a wretched creature, a miserable servant, a worm of the earth, which in the sight of God is less than nothing; judge then I say, if you can, of the greatness of the injury; but you can never arrive at a perfect apprehension of it, although all the knowledge of both men and Angels were centered in your soul.

Sin is an affront so great, that it made St. *Austin*, and other Divines after him, say, that it were far better the whole frame of the world should perish, that is, heaven and earth, and all contained therein, than that we should commit any one mortal sin. "Sin (says that holy Doctor) is to dishonour God, which a man ought not to do, although all things, except God, be destroyed."

Sin is so high an insult, that it made St. *Anselm* say, that "he should see on one side hell open with all its flames; and on the other side, one mortal sin to be committed; and that he were forced to make choice, he would rather choose to cast himself into hell, than sin mortally\*." And he adds the reason. "Because, (says he) I would rather descend into hell innocent and without sin, than enjoy heaven, whilst defiled with sin." "for it is most certain, that only the wicked are tormented in hell, and only the just are blessed in heaven." Although the necessity of choice can never happen; yet the supposition, which this great Saint makes, manifestly shews the grievousness of mortal

\* St. Anselm de similitudinibus, c. 190.

fin, and the injury which by it is done to God: and it is grounded upon this undoubted truth, that the evil of the fault is infinitely greater, and more to be feared than the evil of the punishment.

Sin is so heinous an affront, that if all the men in the world, and all the Angels in heaven, should unite in deploring the injury offered to God by any one mortal sin, and attempting the reparation of his honour, their atonement would not be answerable to the injury that had been done to his infinite majesty.

Sin is an injury so great, that only God himself was able to repair it; and to perform this, it was necessary that God should reduce himself to a state in which he might satisfy, should humble himself so as to become man, and offer himself a sacrifice to the divine justice, the infinite value of which not only equalled, but far surpassed the grievousness of sin; two things were here wonderfully united, the divinity and humanity, " *this* to be offered, " and *that* to give infinite value and merit to the offering†."

In short sin is an injury so offensive and enormous, that the flames of hell, which it has enkindled, can neither make satisfaction through all eternity, nor appease the divine wrath against those sinners who had neglected to appease God by the merits of that divine sacrifice, and Christ's precious blood poured out by the Son of God to cleanse them from their sins, and purchase their pardon.

Weigh well all these considerations, *Theotime*, read them often, and endeavour, by frequent meditation; to imprint them in your mind.

## C H A P. XI.

### *Of the dreadful effects of mortal sin.*

THE best way to know a cause, is to consider its effects, so the best means to discover the grievousness of mortal sin, is to reflect on the sad effects which follow from it. We have said before, that we cannot form a just idea of sin, which is an infinite evil, no more than we can of God, who is an infinite good: nevertheless as by the effects which we see of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, we arrive at some knowledge of God: so on the contrary, we may find out in some degree the heinousness of sin, if we do but consider attentively its dreadful effects.

All

\* Euseb. Emif. hom. 6. de Pascha.

All these effects are so many powerful motives of *contrition*, to make us detest and abhor sin. To discover them the better, we shall observe some order, and search for them in several places *viz.* in ourselves, in heaven, in hell, in God himself, and in his Son *Jesus Christ*.

## A R T I C L E I.

*The sad effects of sin in the soul.*

*Sin causes the death of the soul.* **I** Begin with the death of the soul, because this is the first effect which sin produceth as soon as it is committed. *Sin when it is compleated begetteth death* \*. I wish that this death were as sensible as it is real, and that those who are so unfortunate as to fall into mortal sin, might as clearly discern the greatness of the evil which thereby they draw upon themselves as really it is enormous in itself.

Sin then (says the scripture) is no sooner compleated, but immediately it causeth death, doubtless not of the body, for a man does not die in the moment he has committed it, but the death of the soul, a thousand times more dreadful than that of the body, for this does but separate the soul from the body: but the death which is caused by sin is a separation of the soul from God, its supernatural life. And as this life, which God gives the soul, is infinitely more estimable than that which the soul confers upon the body, by animating it: so the death which causes the loss of the divine life, is infinitely more dreadful.

To understand this well, you must know what faith teaches concerning a soul which has the blessing to be in a state of grace. It is this; when God receives a soul into his friendship, he clothes her with the robe of sanctifying grace, a supernatural and divine quality, which cleanses the soul from all the spots of sin, and renders her agreeable in the sight of God. At the same moment he replenishes her with divine gifts, as faith, hope, charity and other Christian virtues: then by means of grace God dwells in the soul after a particular manner, he makes her his temple and habitation, where he is pleased to be adored and loved by the soul which possesses him, and interchangeably communicates himself unto her, filling her with his holy spirit and divine inspirations.

\* Jam. i. 15.

All these truths are drawn from the express words of the sacred scripture. *The Lord will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be washed from all your filthiness* \*: This water is sanctifying grace. The charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us†. Know you not that you are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you‡. If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him§. God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him¶. A great number of the like passages, clearly represent to us the state of the soul sanctified by grace, and the great happiness she enjoys in that condition, wherein she possesses God himself, and is possessed by him.

Now all this felicity is constant and permanent, as to what respects to God, whose gifts are without repentance||: the soul alone can deprive herself of this happiness.

This misfortune befalls us, when, forgetful of the infinite blessing we possess, and permitting ourselves to be surprised by the allurements

of sin, we break that happy alliance which God had made with us; and this by a criminal disobedience, whereby we incur the displeasure of God, and lose in a moment all those inestimable blessings which before we happily enjoyed.

Who can sufficiently express the dreadful misfortune of a soul in mortal sin and paint to the life the deplorable state to which she is then reduced? The soul in that very instant is deprived of the presence of God, and of one beautiful and as an angel in his sight, becomes as hideous and hateful as a Devil. *How is the gold become as the finest colour is changed* \*\*. Is there any subject, to which we may more fitly apply those doleful words of *Jeremy*? How comes it to pass that this soul should be so defaced? what is become of that grace which made her more bright than gold? how is that divine beauty changed into so hideous a form?

This is an effect of the divine anger, which has justly filled that soul with cloudy darkness, which before had unjustly banished the light of grace. But what is most to be lamented; that soul which formerly had the honour to be employed as the temple of God, now is herself rejected by him with horror and detestation, and the Holy Ghost abandoning her to be the dwelling place of the Devil. *The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath cursed his sanctuary* ††.

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Ezech. xxxvi. 25. † Rom. v. 5. † 1 Cor. iii. 16. § Joh. xiv. 23. || Joh. iv. 16. || Rom. xi. 29. \*\* Lam. iv. 1. †† Lam. ii. 7.



Is there any misery to be compared to this of being deprived of God? O my God! how is it possible that men should esteem it so little? If a man lose a perishable good, as a friend, or an estate, this he laments most grievously; we lose Thee, and are not at all concerned! can there be any thing either more unjust or more provoking? Is not that most exactly true, which St. *Austin* says upon this subject? "He seems not to have the bowels of Christ's charity, who laments a body from which the soul is departed, and does not at all weep for a soul from which God is separated." rated."

That I may yet make you understand more sensibly the deplorable state of a soul fallen into the displeasure of God, and your own condition, if you are under that misfortune: I shall present here a moving description, which a holy author made in the words, addressed to a soul fallen into mortal sin, and to you yourself if you are in that unhappy state.

"Open thy eyes miserable soul," says this holy doctor, speaking to a soul fallen into mortal sin, "and see what you were, and what you are, in what place you were, and where you are at present. You were the spouse of the most high; you were the temple of the living God; you were a vessel of election, the couch of the eternal King, the throne of the true *Solomon*, the seat of wisdom; you were sister to the Angels, and heir of heaven; and as often as I say you were, you were; so often ought you to lament and weep when you consider your sudden change. Your soul, which was the spouse of God, is become the adulteress of Satan; the temple of the Holy Ghost is changed into a den of thieves; the vessel of election into a vessel of corruption; the bed of Solomon into a dunghill of unclean beasts; the seat of wisdom into a chair of infection; the sister of the Angels is become a companion of the Devil; and she, who mounted like a dove up unto heaven, creeps now upon the earth like a serpent. Bewail then yourself, O miserable soul; bewail and lament, for the heavens weep for you; since all the saints deplore your misery; the tears of St. *Paul* are shed for you, because you have sinned, and have not done penance for what you have committed."

These words, *Theotime*, are not to be read slightly; read them often, applying them to yourself with attention; and without doubt, if you are not totally obdurate, they will make great

pression on your heart, when you consider attentively the unfortunate and deplorable state your soul is reduced to by sin.

## ARTICLE II.

*Of the effects of sin in heaven, and upon earth.*

IF you desire other reasons for hatred and horror against sin, *Theotime*, raise your thoughts to heaven, and see the disorders caused there. This infernal fury has spared nothing; it has carried its rage even to the house of God, which it filled with confusion; it banished one part of the Angels thence, and shut the door to men, and to you yourself. Let us consider these misfortunes one after another.

God in the beginning of the world created an innumerable multitude of celestial spirits of several orders and different perfections, with which he filled heaven, and composed his celestial court, for executing his will both in heaven, and on earth. His design was to replenish them all with the happiness of the perfect possession of the divinity: for this effect, besides the natural perfections he endowed them with, he created them in his grace, and adorned them with all supernatural virtues; thus to afford them a means of disposing themselves for the glory prepared for them, and of meriting it by their actions, and the practice of those same virtues.

When they were in this state, behold, *Theo-*  
*what sin did; when they were, as I said, Sin changed Angels*  
*this state full of great hopes, upon the into Devils.*  
*ment of receiving the fruit of the grace and*  
*virtues which God had communicated to them, and of enjoying the*  
*perfect vision of the divinity, which would have secured their*  
*happiness for ever; behold, sin steals into the minds of one part of*  
*them, overthrows their fair hopes, and occasions a dreadful con-*  
*fusion in the house of God. This was a mischievous thought of*  
*side, begun in one of the chief Angels, who permitting himself*  
*to be surprised by self-love, and the brightness of his excellent*  
*beauty, aspired to surpass all others to that degree, that he would*  
*be some things be like to God himself; demanding an authority*  
*equal with his in the government of all creatures, choosing rather,*  
*St. Bernard says, "to be separated from God, than be subject*  
*to him." Lucifer was followed in this extravagance by many*  
*other Angels, who, adhering to his pride, lifted themselves, as it*  
*proceeds, under his banner. As they persisted in this rebellion, God,*

who cannot endure the guilt of sin, be it in whom it will, gives upon occasion of this first disobedience, the manifest marks of his hatred he bears to that infernal monster. For by one act of indignation, he banishes from his kingdom this rebellious Angel with all his followers, and casts them headlong from the height of heaven to the lowest abyss of hell. Thus that celestial spirit who was, but the instant before he sinned, one of the most beautiful creatures of God, and as one may say, the master-piece of his works, became by his sin an infernal dragon, a sworn and irreconcilable enemy both to God and man.

What is it that has caused this lamentable change? Sin alone: was sin alone that God could not endure in his most perfect creatures. *The heavens*, as it is said in the book of *Job*, are *pure in his sight*\*: and in his Angels he found wickedness†. He found sin in heaven, and in the Angels themselves; yet he did not pardon them, but chained them in hell to be there tormented thereby to manifest to all creatures his hatred to this horrible monster‡.

If sin was so fatal to the Angels in heaven, *Sin banished man* it has not been less terrible to men upon earth. *out of Paradise.* It had no sooner banished the former, but presently shut the gates against the latter. This was when the first man, who being created in the grace of God after he had received all possible assurance of his friendship both to this world and to the next, forgetful of himself, broke the commandments of God in eating the forbidden fruit.

He had no sooner fallen into this offence, but the anger of God appeared against him, and banished him out of the earthly paradise, that garden of delight, where but a while before he had been placed. Both he and all his posterity were condemned to labour to death, and to all the miseries we even now groan under, for the first transgression of the law of God.

What is yet more terrible, the gates of heaven, which till then were open, were immediately shut, as well against himself, as against all his posterity, without the least hope of his ever being able to re-enter those happy mansions, by any means he, either of himself, or any of his offspring of themselves could use. O sin, how dreadful art thou, and what a train of misfortunes dost thou draw after thee!

\* Job xv. 15. † Job iv. 18. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 4.



This misery and desolation continued four thousand years and more, during which time no man ever entered into heaven, not even the greatest saint, until the coming of the Son of God into the world, who by his death opened the gates of heaven so long shut. During that time, how many millions of souls were excluded for ever, and without recovery, from that celestial inheritance! This happened to all those who in that compass of time died in their sins, and without doing penance for them. But after the way was opened to heaven by the merits of *Jesus Christ*; how many are there still that enter not at all! Hell is daily filled with millions of souls, and heaven continues in comparison like a desert. What is the reason? Sin and final impenitence. O, how well did the wise man say, *sin maketh nations miserable*\*. Is it possible, *Theotime*, that you should run so slightly over these fatal and dreadful effects of sin, that they should not move you in the least?

I might here mention the innumerable calamities, the continual and daily effects of sin *Sin occasioned* in the world. Death, which it introduced from *death, and other* the beginning; barrenness of the earth; the re-*effects.*bellion of brute creatures; the deluge which drowned the world near two thousand years after its creation; sickness, plagues and pestilence, war and famine, and all the miseries, as well public as private, which we see and daily feel, are so many dismal effects of sin, whether of that of our first parents, or of those which men continually commit. *Fire, hail, famine, and death, all these were created for vengeance†.* But I shall omit all these evils, although most dreadful, to come to others infinitely greater and more terrible, whereof those are but the fore-runners, according to that infallible testimony of the Son of God. *These things are but the beginning of sorrows‡.*

### A R T I C L E III.

*Of the effects of sin in hell.*

LET us go down into the pit of hell, that so we may conceive a more lively apprehension of the enormity of mortal sin. We shall there see the frightful evils which this monster has occasioned: and from so many dreadful effects, frame a judgment of the malice of that cause which produced them: and there learn, first, to detest

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sin,

\* Prov. xiv. 34.

† Eccli. xxxix. 35.

‡ Mark xiii. 8.



fin, the author of so many evils; secondly, to conceive a wholesome fear of falling into that abyss of misery to which sin exposes us. "It is necessary that we descend into hell alive," that is, think seriously and often on it, "that we may escape falling into "after death\*."

Consider then, *Theotime*, attentively what faith teaches us concerning hell; that it is an eternal fire, which God has prepared for the Devil and his apostate Angels, and with which he has decreed to punish the sins of men, who follow the rebellious example of those ambitious spirits.

This we learn from that terrible sentence. *The sentence to which the Son of God shall pronounce at the day of judgment against the wicked: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

Whereby we learn that the same punishment which is prepared for the Devils, is also appointed for men, and that they shall be companions of those wicked and damned spirits as they were their followers in their rebellion against God. In this we may see what mortal sin is, which renders us obnoxious to the same punishment and damnation with the Devils. Ponder this well, *Theotime*, and behold what it is to be damned together with Devils, and as the Devils are damned; and how great that offence must necessarily be, which deserves a punishment equal to that with which the Devils are tormented.

But what will that punishment be? I confess we are not able to comprehend; but the Son of God, by his infinite wisdom, has summed it up in four words, that we may more easily conceive the words which contain all the horror of hell: *Depart, says he, cursed, into everlasting fire †.*

By these words are denoted the separation from God, the curse of God, fire, and eternity. Behold in four words what hell is, behold the punishment of mortal sin! To be separated from God, to be accursed of God, to be condemned to fire, and that for ever. Who can think of these things, and not tremble with fear and horror? Stay some time here, *Theotime*. This is not a subject to be read in haste: revive these thoughts often, and pause a while upon each of these frightful punishments.

\* St. Bernard. † Mat. xxv. 41. ‡ Mat. xxv. 41.

To be separated from God, the author and fountain of all good, whose protection is a blessing to all creatures, and who no sooner turns away his face, but all things are in trouble and confusion.

To be cursed of God, that is, hated, rejected with indignation, abandoned to all possible mischiefs, without relief, without comfort, without hope.

To be condemned to fire, that is, to the most insupportable of torments.

And this for all eternity, that is, without hopes of ever being delivered from it; so that neither a hundred years, nor a hundred thousand years, nor a hundred thousand millions of years, make up the least part of that dreadful duration. - The unfortunate damned shall be cursed by God for ever. They shall be doomed to the fire of hell, and that for ever. From that very moment that this awful decree shall be pronounced against them, there will be no further resource, or hopes of relief. This will be a thunder-bolt, which, if once it fall upon their guilty heads, will never be withdrawn. It will incessantly torture them, without ever giving them the least repose. During all eternity they will continually hear the words of their condemnation: *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* O mighty God, how terrible art thou in thy judgments! Is not he strangely blind, and stupidly insensible, who fears not to fall into thy hands at the hour of death? Who can live without an apprehension of that tremendous thunder of thy final judgment, which will hurl the damned into endless woe! *Thy sorrows*, says the prophet, that is, the afflictions of this life, *pass*; at least they end with life: but that terrible judgment, which thou layest on the wicked, *the voice of thy thunder is in a wheel*, it shall never cease †. From the moment that it shall issue from thy hands, it continually rolls over their heads, crushes them without ceasing, and yet destroys them not.

#### A R T I C L E IV.

*A continuation of the same subject.*

THIS subject is too extensive, and important, to content ourselves with the little that we have said: Let us not leave it soon, *Theotime*, let us, meditate again and again upon these four punishments of mortal sin, that we may comprehend them well, dread them, and conceive a horror of the cause from whence they arise.

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First

\* Psalm ciii. 23, 29. † Psalm lxxvi. 18, 19.

First then, the damned shall be separated from God, be cast out of his sight, never see him any more, and be eternally deprived of the beatifical vision, and of all the felicities included in it. In a moment they shall see themselves excluded from all those inestimable goods, which God has prepared for his faithful servants; which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*\*. Then they will perfectly know what they have lost, they will be continually afflicted with rage and despair, to see that they have lost such treasures, without hopes of ever recovering them again. Then will the prophecy of *David* be fully accomplished, which says, *the wicked shall see the blessings and favours which God has bestowed upon the just, and finding himself deprived, shall be angry, he shall gnash with his teeth and pine away, the desire of the wicked shall perish*†, and avail them nothing: for it is certain, that God will make the damned know the happiness which they have lost; this knowledge will be one of their greatest punishments. But what gives the heaviest aggravation to the unhappiness of this state, will be the knowledge of the cause, viz. sin, which has involved them in this extreme misery. They will see that there was no other cause of this dreadful aggregation of all imaginable evils than sin, and the sorrow, which they shall conceive for this loss, will be so much more increased as they shall more clearly understand, that it was by their own fault that they are deprived of so great happiness, by having preferred fleeting and deceitful pleasures, before real and eternal blessings. From hence they shall be tortured with despairing rage and oppressed with unspeakable grief. As long as God shall be God, they shall continually hear that prophecy, *He shall never see light*. And those words of the Angel in the *Apocalypse*: *without are dogs, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie*§. This is the miserable state to which those cursed of God shall be reduced, being separated from him for ever more; and that by a just judgment of God, who will forget them in the other, who forget him in this life; “God will never know them for his servants, who would never acknowledge God for their Master. They shall die to this mortal life, to live eternally to an everlasting death ¶.”

\* 1 Cor. ii. 9. † Psalm cxi. 10. ‡ Psalm xlviii. 20. § Apocalypse xxii. 15. ¶ Euseb. Enchiridion, hom. 3. de Epiphania.



In the second place, the damned shall be accursed of God. What is it to be accursed? *Sin causes the*  
 Do you understand well this word, *Theotime*? *curse of God.*  
 And do you not tremble, when you hear it?  
 For to be cursed of God is not only to be out of his favour, to be loathed by him, which yet are dreadful evils; but it is to be deserted of God in such manner, as to be rejected by him, and abandoned to all possible misfortunes. The curse of Almighty God is not like that of men; for this is but a desire, or imprecation of some evil, which one man wishes to another: and this does not always take effect, because men desire evils, which they are not able to inflict. But the curse of God is efficacious, it causes the evil which it threatens, puts it in execution, without any one being able to prevent it. *For who resisteth his will*\*? If there be any resistance, it both encreases the curse, and the evil which the person accursed endures.

This opposition will augment the curse of the damned. Their wicked and rebellious wills shall eternally resist the will of God; and the will of God shall perpetually resist and confound theirs. "There never will be any agreement, says St. Bernard, between those two wills; because the one is just, right, and equitable; the other is unjust, perverse and wicked; the one incessantly desires, the other eternally hates the punishment of sin, from which however it shall never be delivered. It will indeed continually employ the utmost endeavours to shun pain, but to no purpose: It will be incensed against its own torments, and against God himself. O what a torture is this, could we but rightly understand it! Is there any torment greater than that of the depraved will of the damned, to be labouring and struggling in vain? What affliction more painful than always to desire that which will never come to pass, and continually to wish to be freed from that which they shall perpetually endure? The damned shall continue during all eternity without obtaining what he desires, and yet shall everlastingly suffer the evils which he would not suffer. Who will put all this in execution? It will be God, who is upright and just†. And who for that reason can never agree with the unjust and depraved will of the damned; but on the contrary will perpetually resist it, and eternally confound it. A misfortune which shall certainly befall all those, who shall set themselves  
 "seves

\* Rom. ix. 19.

† L. 3. de Considerat. c. 12.



"selves against that strait rule; which knows not how to bend,  
"or yield to its contrary."

Such shall be the effect of the curse of God upon the damned, from the first moment that it shall fall upon their heads. Does it not hence appear how dreadful damnation is? But this is not all:

For in the third place, those wretched and accursed souls shall be cast into the torment of fire, even into the fire of hell, which is the

minister and instrument of divine justice, the fruit and issue of mortal sin. *A fire*, says the Prophet, *shall go before him: and shall burn his enemies round about\**. *Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire in the time of thy anger: the Lord shall trouble them in his wrath, and fire shall devour them†*. That fire, of which the Lord says: *A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell‡*. That fire, "in comparison whereof our elementary fire is but a painted fire," as St. *Austin* says. God has communicated to it an impetuosity and violence, which surpasses every thing in this world. It burns not only bodies, but souls also and spirits by a wonderful virtue, which the divine justice grants it, in raising it above its nature, to be able to torment spiritual beings: This fire by another extraordinary quality burns all without either consuming the subject upon which it acts, or ever spending its own substance. Our fire consumes the things it burns, which when it has destroyed, spends itself for want of fuel; but the fire of hell is of a quite contrary nature, ever burning without consuming, and ever tormenting without diminution or abatement. For this reason our Saviour calls it, *an unquenchable fire§*. "Because the fire of hell being created by God for the punishment of sin, it chastises the sin, without destroying any part of the miserable subject upon which it acts¶."

O fire! is it possible that men should fear thee so little! is it not a wonderful thing that so many words should be necessary to raise in men a dread of those scorching flames? We have a strong and lively apprehension of that we feel here. If a small spark fall but on our hands, it makes us cry out again: if one were constrained to put his finger in the fire but for a quarter of an hour, it could not be endured, and yet the fear of the fire of hell makes not the least impression upon us! The prophet cries out to all: *Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? Which of you shall dwell with everlasting*

\* Psalm xcvi. 3. † Psalm xx. 10. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 22. § Mat. iii. 12.  
¶ Euseb. Emif. hom. 1. ad. Monachos.

*everlasting burnings* \*. Yet how very few endeavour to avoid those inexpressible torments, or the object that deserves them, which is sin: or think seriously of the means to escape them, which are penance, and a virtuous life. Let us weigh this well, *Theotime*, and not follow the throng of those blinded persons, who run thus headlong to their own ruin; and for want of thought and foresight, precipitate themselves into this infernal fire.

Now, for the better escaping this dreadful *Sin causes a miserable eternity.* misfortune, let us consider its duration; which will not be for a day, or a year, or a hundred years, but for all eternity. *Into everlasting fire*, that is, this fire, and all the other torments of the damned, shall never end, they shall endure as long as God shall be God. Death, when all comforts fail, is at least a sure refuge for grief and pain in this life: but in hell we shall not have this satisfaction; death there is inexorable: it is always present and always absent. The damned see it continually, and yet it always flies from them. *Men shall seek death, and shall not find it: and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them* †. What more frightful state than that of death? and yet death will never come. There will be no other life for those miserable creatures than a perpetual death, and no other death than to live continually amidst those everlasting torments, which from their excessive violence, would incessantly destroy them; but the justice of God will not permit them to die, that they may continue suffering for all eternity. They shall eternally suffer all the pangs and agonies of a thousand deaths, without the power of dying. They shall be oppressed with unspeakable grief, and tortured with everlasting despair of being freed from their miseries. Their minds shall be always racked with this sad thought; *thou shalt never be freed from hence*. What! not after a thousand years? No. Not after ten thousand years? Not after a hundred thousand years? Not after a million of years? No, never. Thou shalt be eternally tormented. O eternity, how much thou art to be dreaded? Is it possible, *Theotime*, that you can read this without trembling? for my part, I can never think of it without horror. But it is to little purpose to have a dread of hell, if we do not endeavour to escape it: wherefore let us come to the conclusion which follows.

Conclu-

\* Isai. xxxiii. 14.

† Apocalypse ix. 6.

## Conclusion of this ARTICLE.

*Of the pains of hell.*

**I**T is of infinite importance, not to read slightly and cursorily these frightful pains, that shall never have an end, into which we may daily fall. For this reason, *Theotime*, I conjure you to read them often with great attention, and add three or four reflections.

The first is, that all which we have said, or can be spoken of these torments, is nothing, if compared to what they are in themselves. We can neither find words to express, nor ideas to conceive this state of endless misery.

The second is, that these pains are a just punishment of mortal sin. There is not any other, besides that cursed cause, which has occasioned these so dreadful effects of the divine wrath, and set God and man at such an immense distance. *Your iniquities have divided between you and your God\**. These exquisite and eternal pains may help us to understand three things; the *greatness and enormity* of mortal sin; the *hatred* which God bears it, since he punishes it so dreadfully; and the *detestation* we ought to have of it, as well for those pains, as for the hatred God bears to sin.

The third is, that you have merited these pains of hell by the sins you have committed, and already deserved to be of the number of those unhappy damned, to suffer the tortures which they endure, to be from this instant debarred of all hopes of ever seeing God, or ever being freed from hell. Is not this consideration enough to make you weep and lament? and is not this an urgent motive to raise in you a detestation of sin, which has cast you into such imminent danger, the very thought whereof ought to make you tremble?

But in the fourth place, reflect upon what has hitherto preserved you from that dreadful danger; and you will find it to be no other than the pure goodness of Almighty God, which has not treated you according to your deserts, by permitting you to die in that sinful state, as most justly he might have done, and as he has done to others who have not committed greater sins than yours, perhaps. Where had you now been, had he treated you in that manner? You had been before now eternally lost, and damned for ever. And why has he not done it, but only out of his infinite mercy which daily waits for your repentance? O *Theotime*, how we

\* Isai. lix. 2.



may you say with the prophet; *The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed* \*. Without a question it proceeds only from the pure mercy of God, that you have yet time to work out your salvation. How perfect then ought your love to be towards him, who has shewed himself so merciful towards you! and what can you refuse to do, in return for such favours received, and to make a right use of your time and the means he affords you for securing your salvation?

The fifth and last reflection is, that you cannot now work out your salvation, nor avoid for the future that eternal damnation, except you change your life, and do penance. *Except you do penance, you shall all perish* †. Take notice, Christ says *all* without exception, either of old or young, or what condition soever. Conclude from hence, and form your resolution: remember, that upon this resolution depends your salvation and your eternity. Wherefore do not make a slight, but a constant and an effectual resolution; such as is accompanied with a change of life.

# ARTICLE V.

*Of the effects which sin produces in respect of God himself.*

THIS title is surprising, and I declare, that if it be taken according to the rigour of the expression, it imports a thing equally incredible, as impossible: For how can God, who is perfectly unchangeable receive any alteration in himself from external causes? That sin should have filled heaven with disorders, earth with miseries, hell with confusion and horror, is but too true: but that God himself should be sensible of these effects, this cannot be easily understood.

It is true, *Theotime*, that this is hard to be understood, but the sacred scripture, that oracle of truth, represents to us in so many places the different effects which sin seems to cause in respect of God, that we cannot doubt it. For of all the passions which men conceive against what is displeasing; as grief, repentance, hatred, anger, indignation, fury; there is none which the scripture does not take notice of, as remarkable in God against sin.

It says, that God seeing the sins of men, was touched with a lively sorrow, and repented that he had created man, who had so heinously offended him. *It repented him that he had made man, being*

\* Lam. iii. 22. † Luke xiii. 5.



ing touched inwardly with sorrow of heart \*. It says, that those who sin, contristate the Holy Ghost. *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God †. To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike ‡.* That he is angry against those that offend him. That sin kindles his fury and indignation: *The Lord was exceedingly angry with his people; and he abhorred his inheritance §.* The whole scripture is full of these expressions, which give us plainly to understand, that sin which caused disorder in all God's creatures, has not spared the Creator; and that this infernal monster, as much as possible, attacks God himself, and, were it possible, would destroy him.

Indeed, *Theotime*, these different affections which the scripture attributes to God in respect of sin, are not to be found in God in the same manner as in men; for they cause in men a discomposure of the mind, from whence they are called passions, or the sufferings of the soul; but they make no such change in God, who being unchangeable cannot be moved, or suffer by different affections. When therefore in scripture they are attributed to God, it is to be understood, no farther than as to the sensible effects he is pleased to manifest; and not as to any change of affection in God.

We may however hence form some notion of the malignity of mortal sin. For it is reasonable to judge of the evil tendency of a cause, by the bad effects which of its own nature it is capable of producing, although the effect may not follow, owing to some impediment. Sin of itself is sufficient to produce in God all those passions, though his sovereign perfection renders him incapable of being agitated by them. This does not lessen the malice of sin, which were it possible would excite in God all those passions of grief, hatred, anger, fury and indignation.

O sin, how highly treasonable art thou who darest to rebel against the Deity, and insult his sovereign majesty, even on his throne of glory! The Prophet *Osee* says, *Let Samaria perish, because she has stirred up her God to bitterness ¶.* So let sin for ever perish, which as much as in it lies, fills that infinite ocean of sweetness and bounty with gall and bitterness!

Behold, *Theotime*, the reasons we have to detest and abhor sin, and from whence we may form a motive of true *Contrition*, that is a reason why we are to detest sin, not only for the evils which

expose

\* Gen. vi. 6. † Eph. iv. 30. ‡ Wisd. xiv. 9. § Psal. cv. 4.  
¶ Of. xiv. 1.

exposes us to, but for the evils with which it affects even God himself, whom it attempts to assault though in vain.

A R T I C L E VI.

*Of the effects of sin in the person of Jesus Christ.*

**T**HAT which sin could not effect in God, it has brought about, in his only son our Lord *Jesus Christ*. If the divinity, by reason of its infinite perfections, be raised above the attempts of this infernal monster, the most sacred humanity of the Son of God has suffered beyond all that we can either speak or conceive. Consider this well, *Theotime*, and observe the enormity of mortal sin, by the greatness of those evils which it made him to suffer, who undertook to destroy it.

Consider first, that it was sin which made the *For sin Christ* Son of God descend from heaven; that is, *came from heaven.* which obliged him to take upon himself our humanity, and stoop to that wonderful debasement of his person, (which *St. Paul* \* called annihilation, or becoming nothing) as to make himself man for us, to take the habit and form of a servant, to put himself in a capacity of satisfying divine justice for the infinite injury done him by mortal sin: an injury never to be repaired, but by one who is both God and man.

Secondly, this adorable mystery of the incarnation was no sooner accomplished, than the *For sin Christ* first thought of the Son of God made man was *suffered.* to offer himself in person to his eternal father, in satisfaction for the sins of all men, as he himself said by the prophet †. The sacrifices, and holocausts which hitherto have been offered to appease thy wrath against sin, were not able to give thee satisfaction: wherefore I am come, and knowing that it was thy will that I should satisfy, I am content, O my God, and embrace with all my heart what thou hast been pleased to decree.

From that first moment of the Son of God being conceived, till his passion, his life was a continual sacrifice which he offered to his father; the divine love was always burning within him, and never allowed him any repose till he had accomplished the work he came for; and by his death had destroyed that monster sin. This he himself testified, when he said, *I have a baptism where-*

\* Phil. ii. 7. † Psalm xxxix. 7, 8, 9.

wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened interiorly until it be accomplished\*.

If we do but reflect upon the pains and toils of the life of the Son of God, his fasting, preaching, watchings, prayers, and all that he has done and suffered, as well in soul as body, during the thirty-three years of his mortal life, we shall easily perceive, that all tended to the destruction of sin, for which he principally came into the world.

The time being at length come, wherein he was to enter into the last combat of that so great war, which he was to wage against sin, and the Devil its first author; what was he not obliged to do and suffer, that he might conquer so base an enemy! Indeed he gained a glorious victory, but it was with the loss of his precious life, and at the price of his own death. But what a death *Theotime*? A death full of sorrows and reproaches, the death of the cross; a death accompanied with pain and confusion, the death of the cross. A death accompanied with all imaginable affronts executed by those he had in the highest degree obliged, betrayed and delivered up by one of his own disciples to his mortal enemies abandoned by the rest, and denied by *Peter*; arraigned before a judge; accused as a criminal; sentenced and condemned as a malefactor; exposed to the derision of the multitude. Before his execution he was scourged with no less cruelty, than shame and disgrace; delivered over to the insolence of soldiers, who crowned him with thorns as a mock King; in fine, led to execution, nailed to the cross, exposed to the view of all the world between two thieves, as an impostor and the worst of men. Amidst these excessive pains of his body, and yet far greater anguishes of his soul overwhelmed with sorrow and confusion, he expires upon the cross and commends his spirit into his hands who had sent him.

O *Theotime*, have you ever thought on these sufferings of the Son of God, your Saviour? Or if you have thought on them, did you reflect with the attention they deserve? But perhaps you have not reflected upon that which caused them. Have you thoroughly considered that it was sin alone which crucified the Son of God? It is true, they were *Jews* who persecuted him to death; it was *Pilate* who condemned him, and the executioners who nailed him on the cross. It is also true, that he offered himself unto death and underwent all these hardships voluntarily: *He was offered* be

\* Luke xii. 50.



...it was his own will\*. It is moreover most certain, that his eternal father required that of him, and obliged him to drink that bitter cup: It is also without a question, that sin was the first cause of the suffering of the Son of God. Sin first persecuted him, and was at last his most cruel executioner. If he offered himself to death, it was, because he had willingly charged himself with our sins. If the eternal father would have him suffer, it was to receive from him the satisfaction which was due to his divine justice upon account of sin. *The Lord, saith Isaias, hath laid on him the iniquity of us all†. And his eternal father says, that For the wickedness of my people have I struck him‡.*

Hearken here to the description the same prophet *Isaias* gives of the torments of the Son of God, which he saw as clearly in spirit, as if he had beheld them in effect. *There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, despised, and the most abhorred of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his visage was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed§.*

Behold, dear *Theotime*, how much our sins have made *Jesus Christ* suffer. Behold to what condition that cruel enemy has reduced the Son of God. Is not this sufficient to make us judge of the enormity of mortal sin, seeing it made him suffer so great torments, who had undertaken to destroy it; seeing also the fault could not be expiated, nor the damage repaired, but by the death of a God made man, whose life is infinitely more estimable and precious than those of all men, Angels, and the whole creation? Ought we not then to say, that the wounds we have received by sin, are truly dreadful, since they could not be cured by any thing less than the blood of the Son of God? "O man acknowledge how great those gashes were, that obliged the only Son of God to be wounded to cure them. If those sores had not been mortal, and the causes of an eternal death, the Son of God had never died for their recovery¶."

Can there be a stronger motive to lament and abhor our sins, than to reflect that they were the cause of the Son of God suffering  
Vol. II.

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\* Isai. liii. 7. † Isai. liii. 6. ‡ Isai. liii. 2. § Isai. liii. 2, 3, 4, 5.  
St. Bernard, Serm. 3. de Nat. Dom.



so much, and dying upon the cross? Have we not reason to sigh and lament, as the *Jews* did for the destruction of the royal city of *Jerusalem*, and the loss of their king: *The crown is fallen from our head: woe to us, because we have sinned* \*. How much more reason have we to lament, who by our sins are the only cause of the death of *Jesus Christ*, our king, our redeemer, and our glory!

Weigh well, *Theotime*, and meditate upon this motive of sorrow and contrition; it will soften your heart, if it be not harder than marble. "It is a shameful thing for Christians not to acknowledge the evils which sin has brought upon them, when they consider what so supreme a majesty, as that of the Son of God, has been obliged to suffer for them. The Son of God takes compassion on the miseries of man, and weeps; while an insensible man, who is overwhelmed with his own sins, is not concerned†." O *Theotime*, be not so blind and insensible as to slight the grievousness and enormity of mortal sin, but conceive a hatred from the bottom of your heart against that infernal monster, which could not be destroyed but by the passion and death of the Son of God.

The least reflection on the passion of the Son of God, will teach you three important truths, which you ought never to forget. First, you will conclude that sin is a heinous evil, since nothing less than the death of the Son of God could destroy it. Secondly, that he must have suffered much, since so great an evil was to be destroyed. And thirdly, that the Son of God has loved us immensely, since he has suffered so much to free us from so great an evil.

These three considerations ought never to be separated, the grievousness of sin, the great sufferings of the Son of God, and the excess of his love in suffering to free us from this great evil. If you bestow a little reflection on them, they will produce and feed these two affections in your soul, a detestation of sin and a love of *Jesus*. A detestation of sin, which crucified your Saviour; and a love of your divine Saviour who gave himself to be crucified for your sins. If you are not more insensible than brutes, you will say with St. Paul†, *Anathema* to sin and to all those who do not love their Saviour. You will stand self-convicted of having lost

\* Lam. v. 16. † St. Bernard, Sermon 3. de Nat. Dom. ‡ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

him too little hitherto, and you will say with the same Apostle, that for the future you are resolved to love him with all your soul, who loved you, and delivered himself for you \*."

C H A P. XII.

*The practice of contrition upon the preceding motives.*

LET us now resume all we have said concerning the motives of contrition from the eighth chapter, that we may come to the practice of this great virtue, without which it is impossible to be justified in the sight of God.

To have *contrition*, we must conceive the enormity of mortal sin, which we have demonstrated from several heads.

First, because it is incomprehensible in itself.

Secondly, from the knowledge we have of it from the sacred scripture, which discovers to us the several great indignities found in sin; calling it a rebellion against God, a detestable ingratitude, a contempt of his holy will, a postponing the Creator to the creature, and a preferring of our own will before the will of God.

Thirdly, from the heinous injury which by sin is done to God; an injury so great, that man of himself is incapable of making satisfaction for it.

Fourthly, from the dreadful effects caused by sin throughout the creation; in heaven, in earth, in hell; in the Angels, in man, in God himself, and in his Son *Jesus Christ*.

All these motives are very efficacious towards influencing that deep sorrow, which is called *contrition*, if you read them with the attention they deserve. Endeavour to understand and remember them: read them again and again, and pause some time upon those which move you most; weigh them well, and imprint them in your heart: and having understood them, cast yourself upon your knees, and bewail your sins in the presence of God upon those motives which affected you most, and beg pardon, beseeching him to shew his mercy towards you, making use of this or the like prayer.

O my God! see me prostrate before thy divine majesty to acknowledge my wretched state, and implore thy mercy. I present myself to thee as my judge, whose justice I ought to dread. I confess my guilt, and that I have deserved thy just indignation. Thou art he, O my God, whom I have offended, whom I have

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‘insulted;

\* Gal. ii. 20-

'insulted; rebellious, ungrateful, and perfidious creature as I am;  
 'Thee have I abandoned to follow my pleasures and passions;  
 'have lost thy grace by my sins, and made my soul a slave to the  
 'Devil. I have lost heaven my blessed country; I have deserved  
 'hell and eternal damnation, which I shall never be able to avoid  
 'without the assistance of thy great mercy. But above all, I have  
 'infinitely offended thy bounty: the injury which I have offered  
 'it, is so great, that it caused thy Son *Jesus Christ* my Saviour to  
 'suffer death. O my God, how can I worthily deplore so great  
 'an evil! who will give water to my head, and a fountain of Tears  
 'to my eyes to deplore night and day my misery and malice  
 'and to atone for my sins? It is from thee alone, O my God, that  
 'I can expect so great a favour. I beg this so necessary contrition  
 'without which I cannot hope for mercy. Give me that contrite  
 'and humble heart, which is that agreeable sacrifice which thou  
 'wilt never despise. I beg with my whole soul, that by thy grace  
 'I may deserve thy mercy.'

Say this or the like prayer with the greatest devotion, and a dis-  
 sence of your own misery; afterwards turn your mind to the pre-  
 ceding motives, in order to excite this necessary sorrow, hatred of  
 sin, regret for having committed it, and resolution of doing so no  
 more, dwelling chiefly on the motives which affect you most.  
 'That you may perform it the better, employ this last means I am  
 going to propose.

### C H A P. XIII.

*Examples of repentance taken out of holy writ.*

**A**LTHOUGH what we have said might suffice to excite  
 true sorrow for our sins; yet we will add another prevailing  
 motive, taken from the example of those true penitents found both  
 in the Old and New Testament, who may serve as models to re-  
 penting sinners.

*David.*

Consider *David* after his sin, how full of  
 interior trouble and concern he was for the evil  
 he had done; bedewing, as he says, his bed with  
 his tears, and having always his sin before his eyes, imploring  
 mercy of God, and beseeching him to turn away his eyes from  
 iniquities, not to take away from him his holy spirit, nor to de-  
 spise the sacrifice which he offered him, of an afflicted mind,

in humble and contrite heart. Behold a true penitent, behold what true *contrition* is. Imitate this example, and you will become a true penitent. You will find the excellent dispositions of a penitent mind in the seven penitential Psalms, if you read them with attention.

Behold King *Ezechias* weeping and lamenting in the presence of God, and promising to recount in the bitterness of his soul all his mispent years, in order to bewail his sins, and obtain mercy. Read his Canticle, which begins, *Ego dixi in dimidio* \*.

*Ezechias.*

Cast your eyes upon those good *Israelites*, who were sent captives into *Babylon* after the taking of *Jerusalem*, doing penance for their sins, which had reduced them to that miserable state, and crying out to God from the bottom of their hearts, *We have sinned against the Lord our God, by not obeying his voice. To the Lord our God belongeth justice: but to us confusion of face*, which our sins have deserved. *We have sinned, we have done wickedly, we have acted unjustly, O Lord our God, against all thy justices. Let thy wrath be turned away from us: hear, O Lord, our prayers and our petitions: open thy eyes and behold: for the dead shall not give glory to the Lord: but the soul, that is sorrowful for the greatness of the evil she hath done, and performs due penance* †.

*The captive Israelites.*

Consider *Manasses* also in his conversion groaning under the weight of his sins, and lamenting his iniquities with such a sorrow, that he owned himself unworthy even to lift up his eyes towards heaven; so great, he confest, were his offences! You will perceive his words to proceed from a truly penitent soul, overwhelmed with sorrow for his sins. 'Tis true,

*Manasses.*

O Lord, says he, I have infinitely offended thee, and my sins are more in number than the sand of the sea; I am unworthy to lift up my eyes towards heaven to crave thy mercy, having provoked thy anger, as I have done, by my iniquities: but now, O my God, I prostrate myself from my heart before thee to beg thy mercy. I have sinned, O my God, I have sinned: I acknowledge all the evil I have done. Pardon, O Lord, thy pardon I most earnestly beg of thee. Do not destroy me with my iniquities; do not reserve me to the most rigour of thy justice; do not condemn me for ever to the

*The prayer of Manasses.*

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fire

\* *Iſai.* xxxviii. 18. † *Baruch* ii. 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18.



fire of hell. Remember that thou art my God; the God of penitents, and thy immense bounty will best appear in me, whilst it makes thee to save a miserable sinner unworthy of thy grace, and gives me occasion to praise thee eternally for thy infinite goodness.

Go to the Gospel, and there you will find still more striking examples of penance and contrition.

There you may see a holy penitent, moved to that degree with sorrow for her sins, that scorn-  
*S. Mary Mag-* ing what men might say, she runs to the Son of  
*dalene.* God, casts herself at his feet, washes them with

her tears, so abundantly did they flow, wipes them with her hair and anoints them with precious ointment: thus consecrating these riches, that hair, those tears, to pious uses, which till then she had employed in vanity. And thus that sorrow, she had so happily conceived, broke forth into all the signs of the love of God, and spared nothing to serve him, from whom she expected the remission of her sins. So that she deserved to hear from the mouth of our Saviour, that *many sins are forgiven her, for she hath loved much* \*.

There you will find the head of the Apostles un-  
*S. Peter.* fortunately fallen, by denying his divine master three several times. But he had scarce ended his last denial, when our Saviour by a glance of his eyes, which penetrated *Peter's* heart, makes him return to himself, acknowledge his fault, and conceive so great a grief, that *going forth he wept bitterly for the sin* †. His grief was so unremitted, that it ended only with his life.

You will find in the gospel two other examples of true penance which the Son of God himself proposed in two parables set forth

for that intent. The first is, the person of the  
*The prodigal.* prodigal son, under which figure he sets before our eyes a perfect pattern of a sinner returning to God by penance. This profligate young man, after he had spent all his estate, is forced by the sense of his miseries to reflect or return to himself, and say: *How many hired servants in my father's house have plenty of bread, and I here perish with hunger. I will arise, and go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants* ‡. He no sooner spoke these words, than he puts them in execution, leaves the place

\* Luke viii. 47. † Mat. xxvi. 75. ‡ Luke xv. 17, 18, 19.

his misery, comes and casts himself at his father's feet, to beg mercy at his hands; and such and so great was his his repentance, that whereas he only requested a place among his servants, he was admitted to that of his son which he had lost.

Consider well this pattern, *Theotime*, imitate it in your repentance and conversion. First, practise well that which is signified by these words, *returning to himself*; for we must enter into ourselves to return to God; that is to say, we must acknowledge the miserable condition to which we are reduced by sin, the distance from God, the loss of his grace, the want of spiritual favours, and particularly of divine inspirations, and above all, the continual danger of damnation.

Secondly, in this view of your misery, conceive a horror of it, and form in your heart a ready and firm resolution to return to your heavenly father, in those words of the prodigal son: *I will arise from my misery, and will go to my eternal father*; I will declare my fault, and ask him pardon, submitting myself in all things to his will.

Thirdly, do not defer, no more than the prodigal son, the performance of your resolution; begin immediately and in earnest to do penance for your sins: prostrate yourself in the presence of God, and beg his pardon, prepare yourself for a good confession, using all the necessary means to make it well: and in this confession, or even before, make use often of those words of the prodigal: *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants*. But consider attentively their meaning. By those words you profess to God that you have grievously offended his fatherly bounty; that, as a degenerate child, you have abused all his graces; that you have not been ashamed to affront him even in his presence, and in the sight of the whole court of heaven; that you acknowledge yourself unworthy to appear before him, or from thenceforward to be treated by him as his child; that you only implore his mercy and the pardon of your sins, protesting to serve him faithfully from henceforward, to do penance, and execute all his commands, as a good and faithful servant. What an excellent pattern is this, *Theotime*, if you will but imitate it!

The other example is that of the publican, whose person the Son of God has again *The publican*. represented to the life, the dispositions which requires in a true penitent: and that he might set it forth to

the best advantage, he places in contrast a false penitent, whose repentance was only in appearance.

Two men, says he, went up into the temple to pray: the one was Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also as this publican. I fast twice in the week: I give tithes of all that I possess \*. Behold an example of a false penitent, who has no sorrow for his own sins, but who looks more into the sins of others than his own; who justifies himself by the sins he has not committed, instead of condemning himself for those he is guilty of; who esteems himself just before God when he is exempt from some certain sins, although he commits others, and sometimes greater; who thinks he sufficiently satisfies for his sins by some exterior good works, as fasting, and the like, neglecting in the mean time true compunction of heart, and the amendment of life. Behold the idea of a false penitent which is but too frequently found among Christians. Read now the description of a true one.

On the contrary, The publican, says our Saviour, standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck his breast, saying: O God be merciful to me a sinner †. In this example are set forth all the dispositions of a true penitent.

First, a profound humility, which made him stay below in the temple at a distance, and separated from others, as if he apprehended himself, by reason of his sins, unworthy to approach God, or intermix himself amongst the just. "But as much as he retired farther off in himself, so much he approached nearer to God ‡."

Secondly, The shame and confusion with which he was covered to appear before God with a conscience thus burthened with sins, a confusion so great, that it hindered him from raising his eyes towards heaven.

Thirdly, The sorrow he had in his heart for having grievously offended God, in token whereof he smites his breast, "denoting that action the sins concealed within §."

Fourthly, The pardon he implored of God, as a true penitent having no other motive than his own unworthiness on the one side, and on the other the pure mercy of God, from which alone he hoped for pardon, and not from his own merits.

Behold

\* Luke xviii. 10, 11, 12. † Luke xviii. 13. ‡ St Austin, Serm. de verb. Dom. § St Cyprian, de Orat. Dominica.

Behold, *Theotime*, examples and patterns of true repentance, by which we ought to form and model ours. They are proposed to us by the Holy Ghost for that end; and the two last were drawn, and formed by the Son of God, to teach us how to behave in so serious an affair. For this reason, if you resolve to do penance and be truly converted, you must read them attentively; consider their whole conduct, in order to conform yourself to it as near as you can. "And as you have imitated those penitents in their sins and extravagances; so also imitate them in their repentance \*;" as St. Ambrose said to the great emperor *Theodosius*.

### PART III.

#### Of CONFESSION.

HAVING spoken of *contrition*, and the preparations necessary to obtain that eminent virtue; we now come to the confession of sins, which is the second part of penance, as we have said above, in Part II. Chap. II. which you would do well to read once more, for it serves as a foundation to all we are about to say of *confession*, which we shall treat with all possible brevity, yet not without giving you all the knowledge necessary to make it well. I beseech you then, *Theotime*, to read with attention what we are about to say.

### CHAP. I.

#### *Of the institution and necessity of confession.*

THE first thing to be known about this subject is, who instituted confession, and of what necessity it is for the salvation of souls.

We cannot better learn these two truths than from the holy church, which has clearly explained them by the council of *Trent*†.

The council says, "that penance was always necessary before the law of grace, for all those who had sinned mortally, and that they could never receive the remission of their sins, but by detesting them with a holy hatred, and a sorrow of mind for the offence they had committed against God: yet that this virtue was not raised to the dignity of a sacrament, before the coming of

\* Paulin. vit. Ambr. n. 24. † Sess. 14. Chap. 1.



“ of the Son of God, who instituted it on the day of his resurrection, when being in the midst of his Apostles *he breathed on them*, saying: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained*\*.”

“ By this so remarkable an action, (say the council) and by those so distinct words, the fathers, with a common consent, have always understood, that the power of remitting or retaining sins was given to the Apostles and their lawful successors, to reconcile those to God, who had fallen into sin after baptism†.”

And in the fifth chapter, treating of the institution and necessity of the confession of sins, which is the second part of this sacrament, it speaks in these terms: “ Concerning the institution of the sacrament of penance already explained, the universal church has always understood, that our Lord instituted the entire confession of sins, and that it is necessary by divine appointment for all those who have fallen into mortal sin after baptism. Because our Lord Jesus Christ being ready to ascend into heaven has left priests in his place, in quality of presidents and judges, to whom all the sins which the faithful had committed after baptism ought to be discovered, that they might give their judgment either of absolution or retention, by virtue of that power which was given them.”

From all this doctrine of the holy church we learn two truths: The first is, that confession is instituted by *Jesus Christ*; the second, that it is necessary by divine appointment for the remission of mortal sins committed after baptism, as baptism is necessary for the remission of original sin.

We must notwithstanding take notice, that in case of necessity, and where confession is impossible, it may be supplied by contrition, as baptism is also supplied by the same means in those who are capable of it, because in this contrition is included a will to receive baptism, or make a confession: but in this case it is necessary that the contrition be perfect, and proceed from the pure love of God.

CHAP.

\* Joh. xx. 22, 23.

† Con. Trid. Sess. 14. cap. 1.

## C H A P. II.

*What sacramental confession is.*

THIS word *confession* is understood two ways in scripture; sometimes it signifies the praise of God, sometimes the accusation of sins; and the reason is, because that word signifies an avowal and an acknowledgment; and to *confess* signifies to avow or acknowledge any thing. When we acknowledge the greatness of God or his benefits, this is called confession, which signifies as much as the praise or blessing we give to God. When we acknowledge the sins we have committed, it is a confession by which we accuse ourselves. "Confession belongs not only to sinners who accuse themselves, but also to him that praises God \*." "These two confessions are necessary, the one for sinners, the other for the just. Each one of these, offers a sacrifice to God, the one of contrition, the other of praise. Without the first sinners continue in death, and the just without the second are accounted ungrateful to God; and thus confession gives life to sinners, and glory to the just †."

We mean here only to speak of the confession of sins, inasmuch as it is a part of the sacrament of penance, which we define thus: *Confession defined.*

"An accusation of all the sins one has committed to the priest, as vicar of *Jesus Christ*, in order to receive absolution."

In this definition we must particularly take notice of the word *accusation*, which signifies much, but commonly is little understood; for it does not signify a bare recital of their sins, which all those christians falsely deem to be sufficient, who confess their sins, as if they were relating a story. This word implies quite another thing, and means a declaration which the penitent makes of his sins to the priest, as a criminal to his judge, with an intention of acknowledging his guilt, and most earnestly suing for pardon; at the same time shewing a regret for past sins, and a resolution of never more committing them, and moreover of performing such penance as shall be enjoined.

"It is rightly called an accusation, because sins are not to be so recounted as though we boasted of our wickedness; nor are they to be so told, as if for divertisement to some idle hearers  
" we

\* S. Aug. Serm. 8. de verb. Dom. † S. Bernard, Serm. 40 de diversis.

“ we were telling a story. But they are to be so declared by a  
 “ mind accusing itself, as that we desire also to revenge them in  
 “ ourselves \* :” That is, we must accuse ourselves with the senti-  
 ments and disposition of a criminal before his judge. Because the  
 sacrament of penance is instituted by the Son of God as a tribu-  
 nal and judgment, where the sins of the faithful must be discovered  
 before the priest, who ought to judge them, and where the peni-  
 tent ought to appear as self-convicted : Now he cannot appear as  
 such if he be not accused, and he cannot be accused but by him-  
 self ; the declaration then of his sins should have every mark of  
 an humble sollicitation for divine mercy.

## C H A P. III.

*Of the conditions requisite for a good confession.*

**I**T is easy to form a judgment of them from the precedent defi-  
 nition : for since it is an accusation, it ought to have two con-  
 ditions among others : it must be *entire*, that is, of all the sins com-  
 mitted, and it must be made with *sorrow* for having committed  
 them. He who accuses himself in order to obtain pardon, must  
 accuse himself of all the evil he has done, and testify the *sorrow*  
 he has for his faults.

These two conditions produce some others : for the *integrity* re-  
 quires it should be *clear* and *short* : the *sorrow* produces a *shame* for  
 having sinned, and a *submission* to the will of the person offended,  
 with a view to obtain pardon upon whatever conditions he may be  
 subjected to.

These six conditions are requisite for a good  
*Six conditions.* confession. It ought to be *entire*, *clear*, *short*,  
 made with confusion and *shame* of the evil,  
 with *sorrow* for having committed it, and with *submission* to the  
 person offended.

*Entire.* It ought to be *entire*, that is, of all the sins  
 he remembers, after a diligent and sufficient  
 examen. This is to be understood of mortal  
 sins, and without this condition the confession is null : because  
 mortal sins cannot be pardoned separately one without another,  
 because they are all opposite to sanctifying grace, and any one  
 amongst them remaining in the soul, hinders the divine grace  
 from

\* Cat. Trid. de penit. n. 51.

from entering there; hence if we should conceal but one only mortal sin in confession, the sacrament cannot produce its effect, which is the sanctification of the soul by the infusion of grace.

It ought to be *clear*, that is, as intelligible as possible: he ought to have a sincere will to make himself understood by his confessor, and in consequence must avoid obscurity, at least he must not affect or desire to be obscure; for this would be an evident sign that he has a mind to conceal some sins. *Clear.*

It must be *short*, in saying no more than necessary to make himself rightly understood; he must avoid superfluous words, repetitions, and impertinent narrations, too frequent among penitents. He must simply confess his sins in this manner: I accuse myself that I have committed such a sin; and adding only that which is necessary to make the confessor understand the quality of the sin, or answering to the question he shall ask to inform himself. *Short.*

It must be *modest*, that is, expressed with great interior confusion for having offended God. A confusion which makes us blush to see ourselves so criminal in the sight of God, without making us conceal our sins, but rather making us ingenuously and humbly declare them to man, who here holds the place of God. For the penitent, who acknowledges himself guilty in the sight of God, readily discloses them to men. *The just*, that is, he who desires to become just, *is first accuser of himself\**. *Discover first thy sins, that thou mayest be justified †. From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord ‡.* *Modest.*

It ought to be *sorrowful*, that is, with a sentiment of grief and regret for the sins he accuses himself of, otherwise it would not be an accusation, as we mentioned above. *Sorrowful.*

In fine, it must be *humble*, that is, the penitent ought to acknowledge himself guilty, declare that he deserves to be punished, and submit himself to the conditions his judge shall appoint for the remission of his sins. *Humble.*

CHAP.

\* Prov. xviii. 17. † Isai. xliii. 6. ‡ Psalm xviii. 13.



## C H A P. IV.

*Of the defects in confession.*

**A**S we have said that there are six conditions required, so also it is manifest that there are six defects. The want of sorrow, clearness, &c. Notwithstanding, every one of them do not make the confession null; but only the want of those essentially necessary conditions, which are integrity and contrition, and from whence the others spring.

*Want of integrity, or sorrow, makes the confession null.*

The want of integrity as also the want of sorrow render the confession null: this is a certain maxim, which we must carry along with us, that there are two things necessary in the penitent, entire confession and true contrition. If one of these be wanting through the penitent's fault, the sacrament is null, and the confession sacrilegious.

The want of the other conditions renders the confession imperfect, but not invalid, except they be such as destroy one of those two essential conditions, integrity or sorrow. Thus the defect of clearness may be such, that the confessor cannot understand all the mortal sins; in which case it renders the confession null, especially if that obscurity be affected on purpose; the want of humble submission may be so great as to destroy contrition; and so of others.

There are three cases where integrity is wanting in confession. The first, when willingly and knowingly one conceals a mortal sin for shame, fear, negligence, or otherwise.

The second, when one conceals it indirectly, as when he accuses himself in obscure or ambiguous terms, with a design that the confessor should not understand all that he meant to say, or even if he perceives that he did not understand him; or when he accuses himself by halves leaving the rest to be guessed at, or to be asked by the confessor, which happens often to young people.

The third, when one has not made a sufficient examen of his conscience, but goes presently to confession, knowing well enough he is not sufficiently prepared: for although there be a difference between concealing and forgetting a sin in confession; that forgetfulness does not make the confession invalid, when it is not voluntary, or through negligence; for when we are the cause of such forgetfulness, it is certainly a sin, which renders the confession null,

null, from the axiom; he who desires the cause, is judged also to desire the effect, which infallibly follows it.

As to the sorrow for sins, there are many cases wherein the penitent is deficient.

First, when he has made no act of contrition, neither before nor during confession, nor before he receives absolution: in this case the confession is invalid, although it may proceed from pure forgetfulness; because it is essential to the sacrament; it cannot be supplied by any other action.

Secondly, when he makes such an act, but without due conditions; as without supernatural motives, or with a reserve or exception of some mortal sin, for which one retains an affection; in a word, without the conditions spoken of before in Part II. Chap. IV. which you should remember.

Thirdly, when he has not a sincere resolution of amendment; as when the penitent will not leave the occasion of sin, practise the necessary remedies, nor obey his confessor in what is highly reasonable.

## C H A P. V.

*Of the conditions necessary to make the confession entire.*

According to the doctrine of the church there are three: To declare the nature of the sin, the number, and the circumstances that change the nature of it.

*The nature, number, and circumstances of sins must be confessed.*

First, we must confess the nature of the sin: it is not sufficient to say in general terms, I have sinned, I have very much offended God; but we must tell particularly in what: I have committed theft, blasphemy, or detraction.

The reason of this rule is given by the holy council of Trent; priests are constituted judges in this sacrament, to pass a judgment upon the sins of men: Now they cannot exercise that judgment without the knowledge of the cause, nor observe the necessary equity in the enjoining of the penance, except penitents declare their sins in particular, and not only in general terms.

Secondly they must declare the number, that is, how often they have fallen into each kind of sin. This is also absolutely necessary, that the confessor may judge aright: because he who

has

has committed a sin often, is much more guilty than he who has done it but seldom.

Thirdly, we must explain the circumstances which change the nature of the sin, as the same council has declared in express terms; for the same reason that obliges us to confess the sins of a different nature. Thus in theft one must express the circumstance of a sacred place, in which he robbed, or a sacred thing which he has taken: because this circumstance changes the nature, and makes it a sacrilege.

In sins of impurity, we must discover the quality of the person with whom we have sinned, whether a single, or married person, or relation; for these circumstances make different sins, of fornication, adultery, or incest.

Penitents, particularly young people, are often defective in these three rules. For first, as to the nature of the sin, it happens frequently that they do not declare it at all. For example, concerning the sin of impurity, they say no more than that they have willingly entertained evil thoughts, without mentioning in the least, whether they were accompanied with any immodest touches of themselves, or other effects which follow from thence, which are sins of another nature, and more grievous than the thoughts. They will confess they have touched others immodestly, without discovering how, or what sort of persons. They will accuse themselves of detraction, but not offer to declare the thing they have said.

Secondly, as to the number, it happens often, that telling the nature they are afraid to discover the full number, therefore conceal some part, the number sometimes causing as much shame as the nature and quality of the sin. In which case the confession is no less invalid and sacrilegious, than if they had concealed the very nature of the sin.

Thirdly, they frequently commit the same fault by concealing the aggravating circumstances through fear or shame. For example, if they have robbed, or done some considerable injury to their neighbour's goods, or cheated him at play, they are afraid to tell the quantity, lest they should be obliged to restitution.

In all these occurrences when one willingly and wittingly conceals such circumstances, the confession is null. I beseech you, *Theotime*, to avoid these essential faults, which often happen in confession, for want of discovering the nature or kind of the sin, the number, or aggravating circumstances.

CHAPTER VI.

*Advice concerning the number of sins.*

I Have here an advice of great concern to impart to you, dear *Theotime*, about the *Two faults.* number of sins. It is, to avoid in confession two extremes equally vitious: the one is supine negligence; the other is too much exactness and scrupulosity.

Some, to avoid the trouble of a due examination of their conscience, discover nothing of the number of mortal sins, or if they do, it is with great *Negligence.* uncertainty. I have done it for example, twenty times more or less; or else they declare a greater number than they are guilty of, to comprehend therein the number they might have committed: this does not satisfy the exactness which is necessary in confession.

Others on the contrary are so intent upon the search of their sins, and the number of them, that they are never quiet, but vex themselves with continual doubts and anxiety of mind, never believing they have sufficiently examined their conscience. This makes them think of nothing but this examen, and little or nothing of the principal concern, which is *contrition*.

These two faults must necessarily be avoided. For the first may render the confession invalid for want of *integrity*, the other for want of *contrition*.

Those who find themselves guilty of negligence, ought to remember what diligence is necessary to dispose themselves for a thing of such high concern, as is the obtaining of the remission of their sins; and since without confessing them all, that cannot be required, it is necessary they should endeavour with great diligence to remember them, in order to accuse themselves. This is the rule which the council of *Trent* gives, when it says: "It is necessary that the penitents declare all the sins they remember after a diligent examen, even those that are most hidden\*."

As to those others, who trouble and disquiet themselves with the examen of their sins, *Scrupulosity.* they are to be fully persuaded of this truth, that God requires no more of them in this, or any other occasion, than what they are able to perform; and that after they have done what, morally speaking, they are able, in order to remember their

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\* Sess. 14. c. v. de Confess.



their sins, they ought to declare what they remember, and be no farther solicitous; it being most certain, that other sins which they have forgot are to be comprehended in that confession; and that they are pardoned them in the absolution they receive.

This also is a rule of the holy church in the council of Trent, which condemns those of impiety, who say\*: "That the confession of all their sins is an impossibility, and a torture of the conscience: it being certain, says the council, that the church requires no more of penitents, than that every one after he has made a careful examen, and search into his conscience, should confess those sins which occur to his memory: and that other sins, which, notwithstanding such an examen, they do not remember, are esteemed to be generally comprehended in the same confession; and that it is of these sins we say to God with the prophet: *Cleanse me from my hidden sins, O Lord†.*"

Those who follow this maxim of the church will easily find quiet of mind, and banish the difficulties which arise from their confessions. It is true, they are still in doubt, whether in their examen they used that diligence which the church requires. We shall tell you hereafter in the ninth chapter wherein it consists in the mean time I shall mind you of two things here for your comfort.

First, that this obligatory diligence reaches only to mortal sins.

Secondly, that when, after a serious examen a person cannot call to mind the number of his sins; as it happens in sins of habit or custom, which are frequently committed, as ill thoughts, dishonest words, oaths, and the like, it is sufficient to discover, near as one can, the time since he was first subject to it; and at that time to take notice, as much as may be, how often he may have fallen into them every day, every week, or the like; and after one has declared what he can in this manner, he ought not to trouble himself any farther.

## C H A P. VII.

*Advice concerning the circumstances of sins.*

*The nature of a circumstance.*

THE particular accidents which intervene and are not of the substance of a deed but only accompany it, are called circumstances

\* Sess. 14. c. v. de Confess. † Psal. xviii. 13.

as the quality of the person who sins, the place, the time, the design with which he acted, the end which was proposed, the means made use of, the consequence and evil effects of an action, as scandal, or the like.

Of circumstances some are only trivial, which render not an action worse than it is of itself, and of these we do not speak. There are others that are heinous, and which aggravate exceedingly an action; of these we treat in this place. There are two sorts of them.

Some aggravate a sin to that degree, that they change the nature of it; thus the circumstance of a sacred place, or a sacred thing which is stolen, changes the sin of theft into sacrilege, which is a different kind of sin.

Others aggravate only the sin without changing the species, and are called simply aggravating circumstances.

As to the former, there is no question but it is necessary to declare them in *confession*; and as to the latter it is always most advisable to declare them in *confession*.

It even frequently happens that one is obliged to it; as in these following examples.

1. When one cannot discern whether a circumstance, which one believes to be considerable, changes the sin, or not. For without a large share of learning who is able to do this?

2. When it falls out that a circumstance makes a sin to be mortal, which otherwise would be but venial. Thus, to steal six pence is but a venial sin; but to steal six pence from a poor man that had nothing else to live upon, is a mortal sin. He who strikes another, and does him no hurt, commits but a venial sin; but if in striking him he had an intention to hurt him considerably, he commits a mortal sin; and he ought to declare that intention, when he accuses himself of having struck him.

3. One is also obliged to mention all such circumstances, as exceedingly aggravate a mortal sin. For example: a man who has stolen five pounds has sinned mortally; another who has stolen twenty thousand pounds, has also committed a mortal sin, but incomparably a greater. This excess ought to be expressed in *confession*.

4. This declaration is generally necessary, that the confessor may understand the grievousness of the sin, and the present state of the

penitent, without which he can neither impose a penance suitable to past sins, nor prescribe remedies to avoid them for the future.

In short, to declare ingenuously his sins, with all their circumstances, is a sign of a sincere and truly penitent heart, desirous of healing and saving his soul.

For this reason, *Theotime*, when you accuse yourself of sin, explain distinctly and clearly the circumstances, which seem to render it more grievous in the sight of God. For example, from what motive you did it; whether through passion or malice, whether with an intention to hurt another or displease him; whether scandal, or any other ill effect followed from the sin; whether it was in a holy place, or the like: and answer always with sincerity the questions your spiritual director may ask concerning your sins.

## C H A P. VIII.

*How great an evil it is to conceal a mortal sin in confession.*

**I** WISH this evil was as rare and unheard of among Christians as it is great in itself, and of most dreadful consequence to those who commit it. It is unhappily but too common among penitents, and particularly among simple and young people, because they know not how grievous a sin it is, and the dreadful consequences it draws after it. This is the reason why I treat of it in this place.

First then, *Theotime*, you must know that *Concealment of a mortal sin is a mortal sin.* willingly to conceal any mortal sin, or what you believe to be such, is also a mortal sin. Because our Saviour giving to the Apostles and their successors the power to remit or retain sins, has also obliged the faithful to confess all the sins which after a sufficient examen they remember. Thus to conceal a mortal sin in confession is a formal disobedience to the law of *Jesus Christ* a matter of the highest concern, and is in itself a mortal sin.

Secondly, this sin is a formal and positive untruth even in the important concern of confession; an untruth not told to man, but to God, whose place the priest holds in confession. Now to tell a lie to God is a monstrous crime. Remember the rigorous punishment which God by St. Peter inflicted upon

Ananias

Ananias and his wife Saphira for having told an untruth in a thing of less importance, where they concealed only part of the price of some goods they had sold. *Thou hast not, said the Apostle, lied to men, but to God* \*. And at these words they fell down dead at his feet.

Thirdly, this sin is not only a disobedience to the law of God, and a base lie; but also a sin of sacrilege, and that of the first magnitude. Sacrilege is one of the most heinous sins that can be committed;

*A sacrilege.*

for it is an abuse and a profanation of a sacred thing, or of a thing dedicated to God, and which partakes of his sanctity. And as among holy things there are some more holy than others, so among sacrileges there are some greater and more enormous than others, in proportion to the thing profaned. Now the abuse and profanation of the sacrament of penance by him who conceals a mortal sin, is not only the abuse of a holy thing, but of a thing most holy: because the sacraments are not only exteriorly holy, like churches, altars, and holy vessels, which are holy because they are consecrated to holy uses; but they contain holiness in themselves, in as much as they cause and confer it upon men. If then it be an enormous sacrilege to profane a church, overthrow an altar, or to defile a chalice; judge what we ought to say of the abuse and profanation of a sacrament, and what a horror we ought to have of such a sacrilege.

Fourthly, consider the evil you do in abusing this sacrament in particular, for it is instituted to appease God's wrath, and reconcile us to him. Now in making a false confession, you provoke God by those very means he has appointed to appease him: you make him your enemy at the very time that you desire to be restored to his favour; and you change the sacrament, which is a sentence of absolution, into a sentence of condemnation. Wretched man! are not you afraid of falling under the reproach of the prophet: *You, says he, that turn judgment into wormwood, and forsake justice in the land* †.

*Instead of appeasing, it provokes God's anger.*

Fifthly, consider the wicked abuse you make of the adorable blood of the Son of God. By this sacrament the merits of that blood are applied to us for the remission of our sins; and when the priest pro-

*A profanation of the blood of Christ.*

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nounces

\* Acts v. 4. † Amos. vi. 7.



nounces the sacred words of absolution, he pours upon us that precious blood, which *cleanseth us, as John says, from all sin*\*. But when you are so void of grace, as to make a deceitful confession, and having made it, permit the priest to give you absolution, you frustrate the effect of the blood of the Son of God, which falling upon a criminal and unworthy object, as you then are, is more profaned, contemned, and violated, than when the *Jews* shed it upon the earth, and audaciously trampled it under their feet. Be afraid here of that menace of the Apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews, where he says: *A man making void the law of Moses, dieth without any mercy:—how much more, do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the blood of the covenant unclean, with which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the spirit of grace†?* Ponder well upon these three injuries; for all these you commit by a deceitful confession.

Sixthly, consider how little reason you have to perpetrate such a crime by concealing your sins in confession; “this cannot proceed “but either out of *fear* or *shame*, which are the two inseparable “companions of sin‡:” As for *fear*, what is it that you can apprehend on this occasion? If you fear being defamed, consider that you discover your sins to one man alone, so this cannot defame you; besides, he is tied by all laws both divine and human to an

*Fear and shame  
no excuses for con-  
cealment.*

eternal secrecy, which he cannot violate without rendering himself worthy of death before God and man. So that there is no danger of your honour. Are you afraid to be reprimanded by your ghostly father? this sometimes hinders some people, who must be blind to commit so dreadful a sin for fear of so small an evil; to be more apprehensive of a rebuke from him, who does it merely out of charity and for your good, than of the offence against God, of being reprehended and condemned by him, of being scoffed at by Devils, and lost for evermore. Whoever makes such a choice must have lost his senses. The same is to be said of those who conceal their sins for fear of a great penance, which is yet a more inexcusable folly; yet this is too often the case among young and ignorant people. Let us now come to speak of *shame*, which is the second motive, as vain as the former.

\* 1 John i. 7. † Heb. x. 28, 29. ‡ Tertul. in Apolog.

It is indeed true that sin calls for our shame and confusion, that he is not truly penitent who has not this shame, and that he justly merits the reproach God gives to a sinner, *Thou hast a barrel's forehead, thou wouldst not blush*\*. This shame nevertheless ought not to hinder any one from discovering all their sins in confession; that which withholds us from such a declaration is not shame, but a weakness of mind, or rather a downright madness.

Can there be a greater madness than not to desire to cure a great evil by another which is much less? Than to choose rather to damn one's soul for ever, than to save it at the expence of a momentary confusion? What would you say of a criminal, who, having deserved death, should refuse the pardon offered him by the King on condition that he would discover his crime in private to a judge, deputed by him? All men would certainly pronounce him guilty of excessive madness. Yet this is his case, who conceals any thing in confession. Blind that you are, who choose rather to die and be lost eternally, than confess your sins to the judge, whom God has appointed to take cognizance of them, and grant a pardon if you are worthy! who will rather hide the wound that will cause your death, than shew it to the surgeon who will certainly cure it! who choose rather to be exposed by God before a numberless multitude of men and angels, than to be put to a little confusion before a single man! When you conceal your sins from men, do you think by that means to hide them from the sight of God? You dread the sight of man, and apprehend not that God should know your sins. Is not this to condemn and insult God?

In reality this shame is not so painful, if we form a right judgment of it. It is soon over, and followed by great peace of mind and inexpressible comfort.

But suppose it were a thousand times greater, consider it is but what you have deserved by your sins, which if you refuse to undergo, you must one day suffer much more; at the day of judgment, when the sin, you now conceal in confession, shall be exposed before the whole world, to cover you with a confusion which will pursue you to hell itself, and never have an end, according to God's own word, *I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and perpetual shame which shall never be forgotten*†.

Behold the great advantages such a confession will bring you, the remission of your sins, a solid peace of conscience, the friend-

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ship

\* Jer. iii. 3.

† Jer. xxiii. 40.

ship of God, and eternal salvation. O happy confusion! It is this of which the wise man speaks, *There is a shame that bringeth glory and grace; and, there is a shame that bringeth sin* \*, which is that fatal shame of which we are now speaking.

In short, consider one thing to which there is no reply; that it is impossible you should ever be saved without confessing that sin which you have a difficulty in declaring. Perform all the good works you please of prayers, austerity, or alms-deeds, as long as you retain any one mortal sin in your heart without declaring it in confession, there is no salvation for you; if you die in that state, you are lost for ever.

Do not tell me you will confess it hereafter; but for the present you cannot do it. Remember that the longer you defer it, the greater will be your shame and confusion, and your aversion to disclosing it.

But in waiting for that day, I ask whether in the interim you will go to confession or not? if you do, then you commit so many sacrileges, as will make you a thousand times more criminal in the sight of God, and which will draw upon your head the divine anger and vengeance. If you do not go to confession, in what disorder and confusion do you leave your conscience! and to what danger do you expose your salvation! Who has told you, that that day or time will come which you propose to yourself, and that you shall not die before, and without confession, since you would not confess when you had both time and means to do it?

In conclusion, my dear *Theotime*, if you be in that lamentable state, I conjure you to look to yourself; to enter into yourself that you may discover the dangerous condition to which your salvation is exposed; to open your eyes, and awake from that lethargy. Consider it is the Devil that deceives you, and raises in you the criminal shame, or that foolish fear, by which he designs your eternal damnation, where he has been too often successful.

Call to mind that poor possessed person in the gospel, whom the Devil had rendered both deaf and dumb. His distressful situation moved the Son of God to tears, *Looking up to heaven, he groaned and said to him: Ephpheta, that is, be opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right* †. The miseries which we consider in the body of that per-

\* Eccli. iv. 25.

† Mar. vii. 34, 35.

feſſed man, are found daily in the ſoul which the ſame evil ſpirit has poſſeſſed by ſin, and are far more dangerous. They were the ſpiritual miſeries repreſented in the body of the deaf and dumb man, which drew tears and ſighs from the Son of God. Take pity on yourſelf, and render not yourſelf unworthy of the compaſſion he has for you. Be no longer deaf to the commands he has given you to declare your ſins in confeſſion, nor to all thoſe reaſons which oblige you to it. Make a firm reſolution, and execute it readily and without delay. The Son of God will aſſiſt you in it with his grace, he will open your mouth that you may readily confeſs your ſins, you will receive a thouſand conſolations from him, and praiſing his holy name you will ſing forth, *He hath done all things well; he hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to ſpeak* \*.

## C H A P. IX.

*Of the preparation for confeſſion, or the examination of conſcience.*

**T**HERE is no doubt but we ought to prepare ourſelves for confeſſion; and ſince our memory, ordinarily ſpeaking, is not ſo retentive as to keep in mind things paſt, except we apply ourſelves to recollect them; it follows, that the ſame authority which obliges us to an entire confeſſion of our ſins, obliges us alſo to a previous examen of conſcience, that ſo we may remember the three things above-mentioned, the ſpecies, the number, and the moſt remarkable circumſtances. Hence the council of *Trent* ſays, that we are obliged to declare “all our ſins which we remember after a diligent examen.” But the difficulty is, to aſcertain what this diligence is, and how the examination is to be performed.

It is certain, that no general rule can be preſcribed for this preparation, which depends upon the circumſtances of the perſon; his capacity, time, neceſſity, and ſuch like: for there is more time required to prepare one’s ſelf for a yearly than for a monthly confeſſion: thoſe who have a bad memory, or who obſerve not their daily actions, or ſeldom examine their conſciences, have need of a longer preparation than others.

We muſt follow herein that moſt judicious method which the catechiſm of the council of *Trent* preſcribes†, that is, to uſe the ſame

\* Mar. vii. 37. † De Pœn. Sac. n. 62.



same diligence in this preparation we are wont to employ in affairs of great importance. Wherefore as upon those occasions we bring along with us a seriousness and diligence suitable to the work we have undertaken, endeavouring at the same time not to be wanting in any thing that may help us to compass our design; we must do the same in this of confession, where we are not treating about any temporal concern, but the securing of our eternal salvation, by gaining the remission of our sins; a remission which cannot be otherwise obtained, but by means of a good confession.

*Method of examining our conscience.*

To practise well this general rule, we must perform these three things.

First, we must pray to Almighty God, and beg of him that he will vouchsafe his divine light, whereby we may see our sins; this is a means which we must never forget, on account of the necessity of our being assisted by the Holy Ghost on this occasion. The heart of man is so secret, that he himself oftentimes does not know his own heart, and none but God can search it to the bottom. Our conscience is sometimes so darkened and so obscured, that we are not able to see into it, either by means of our memory or knowledge; only God by his grace and inward light, which he communicates to the soul, is able to dissipate and disperse that darkness, which when he does we easily discover many spots which before we did not see; as we see in the rays of the sun many things, which, in a less light, were hidden from our eyes. Wherefore, *Theotime*, in this preparation you must continually pray to God for this heavenly light. *O my God, enlighten my darkness* \*, that I may discover my sins: come, O Holy Ghost, and dart from heaven a ray of thy divine light.

Secondly, we must observe some method in searching out our sins, in order not to forget any. The best is, to take in order the commandments of God and the church, with the seven deadly sins: for since every sin is a transgression of the law of God, we cannot more easily recollect the sins we have committed, than by going over his commandments, and examining upon every one by itself, whether we have transgressed against it, in what, and how. And as a person may offend against them, not only one, but many ways, it is necessary that we know the divers sins which may be committed against each, either learning them by books which treat thereof, or by the instruction of some understanding person.

Thirdly,

\* Psalm xvii. 29.

Thirdly, the better to perform this examination of conscience, we must enter into ourselves, there to discover our inclinations, and predominant passions; the sins we most usually fall into; the occasions of offending God, which are most fatal to us; the persons we converse with; the places we frequent; the business we have been concerned in; the particular obligations of our state; the omissions we are guilty of; and many other such things.

If you practise well these three means, *Theotime*, you comply with the diligence which God requires at your hands in this preparation; but practise them with serenity and quietness of mind; for disquietude and anxiety of mind are so far from being a help, that they are a hinderance to confession.

Remember that God requires no more than what you can perform; perform it then duly and faithfully; which when you have done, concern not yourself any more about your examination, but apply your thoughts to exciting in yourself a true contrition, and begging pardon of God for your sins.

## C H A P. X.

*Of the distinction which must be made between mortal and venial sin.*

IN this examination of conscience we must not only employ the memory to recollect our sins, but also the judgment to discern the quality and grievousness of them; it being certain, that all sins are not equally grievous.

The first, and the most remarkable difference which ought to be observed is, that of mortal and venial.

That you may understand this difference

rightly, you must know, that every sin is a *Observe.*

transgression of the law of God; but with this

difference, that it is sometimes heinous, and sometimes light.

It is heinous, when it is committed in a matter of concern with knowledge and consent.

It is light, when it wants either all or any of these three conditions; that is, either when the thing itself is of small moment, or being heinous is without sufficient consent; or with consent, but without knowledge of the evil; provided it be not an affected, or any voluntary ignorance.

The

The first is called mortal, taking its name from its effect, by reason of the death it causes in the soul, by depriving her of the grace of God, which is her life.

The second is called venial, because offending God but lightly it is more pardonable.

A weighty transgression offending God grievously, incurs his displeasure, robs the soul of grace, makes it lose the right it has to heaven, which is the inheritance of the children of God, and renders it liable to eternal damnation.

A light transgression offending God but slightly, does not make the soul incur his absolute displeasure, but only causes some small diminution of the love which God has for her.

All that the scripture says of the grievous effects of sin is to be understood of the first transgression, as that *it bringeth forth death*\* that *your iniquities have divided between you and your God*†: in a word all that we have said above in Part II. Chap. VIII. IX. X. XI.

But when the scripture says, *A just man shall fall seven times In many things we all offend*‡. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves*¶. It is to be understood of the second.

## C H A P. XI.

### *Of the confession of venial sins.*

**A**S for venial sins, the council of Trent has given us two rules to follow.

The first is, that to obtain the remission of them, it is not absolutely necessary to confess them. They may be forgiven by only contrition, and a sorrow for having committed them. Because as venial sins do not destroy sanctifying grace, it is not necessary they should come under the jurisdiction of the sacrament of penance which is instituted to restore that grace to those who have lost it.

The second rule is, that although there be no necessity, yet it is very profitable and wholesome to confess venial sins for many reasons. 1. Because by the sacrament of penance they are pardoned both with more certainty, and more grace. 2. By confessing them, we learn better to know and to correct them. 3. It is a very profitable means to avoid mortal sin, as well by reason of the grace which one receives by the sacrament; as also because he that

\* Jam. i. 15. † Isai. lix. 2. ‡ Prov. xxiv. 16. § Jam. iii. 2. ¶ 1 Joh. i. 8.

has a care to cleanse his soul from smaller sins, will be more solicitous and apprehensive how he falls into greater, according to that sentence of our Lord: *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater* \*.

Now there are two things which are to be observed in the confession of venial sins. *Observe two things.*

The first is, therein to avoid scruples and anxiety of mind; a fault which many commit, who examine themselves concerning their venial sins with the same trouble or concern as if they were mortal, and spend so much time in that examination, that they think little or nothing of the means how to amend them.

The second thing to be observed is, that when they confess venial sins, they always conceive a sorrow for having committed them, and make a resolution to amend them. Without these two acts it is to no purpose to confess them; they are not forgiven, although they receive absolution of their other sins, for which they had contrition.

Nay, I tell you more, that if it happens that we have no other but venial sins to confess, and have not sorrow or remorse for any of them, the absolution would be null; and we should commit a sacrilege, because the sacrament would want one of its essential parts, which is contrition. This is a thing we must carefully beware of, as it may very easily happen. *Remark.*

But when I say we must resolve, or have a will to amend our venial sins, I speak of a real, sincere, and efficacious will, and not of a perpetual relapse, which is too frequent.

You will say that this is very hard, and that it is impossible to be without venial sins. To this I answer, and it imports you to observe well, that there are three sorts of venial sins: 1. such as proceed from weakness: 2. such as are committed by inadvertency or surprise: 3. others we call sins of malice, that is, which spring from our sole will with a perfect knowledge; such are those which are committed on set purpose, or by an affected negligence, which we take no care to amend, or which proceed from some tie or irregular affection we bear to some creature. *Three sorts of venial sins.*

As to the sins of weakness or surprise, it is true, we can never be

\* Luke xvi. 10.



be totally exempt from them, and for these it sufficeth to have a good will to amend as well as we can.

But as for sins which proceed from our will, it is in our power to amend, and we are strictly obliged to it because they very much displease God, and the consequences are extremely dangerous.

These sins, *Theotime*, although they seem light, produce very ill effects. They are light, if considered each by itself; but being neglected and multiplied, they become very dangerous. They do not destroy sanctifying grace; but they dispose us very much to lose it. All together they do not make a mortal sin; but they dispose the soul to fall into it. They do not directly cause death, but they cause such weaknesses and maladies that bring death along with them, and make us fall into mortal sin. In a word, although these sins do not break that friendship which subsists betwixt God and the soul which is in the state of grace, yet by little and little they diminish it, and by this diminution charity is weakened in us; God also by degrees withdraws the graces and assistance which he vouchsafes us in all our spiritual necessities: thus having less strength, we more easily fall into mortal sin when temptation comes. Alas, *Theotime*, how many are there who have, and daily do lamentably fall into the depth of vice, the first source whereof was their neglect in correcting venial sins!

Take great care then to avoid small faults, that if you be in the state of grace, you may preserve it; if not, lest you make yourself unworthy of that favour.

## C H A P. XII.

*Of interior and exterior sins, or of the sins of thought and action.*

**I**T is also very necessary to be observed in confession and examination of conscience that there are sins which may be committed interiorly, or by consent in thought only, and others which proceed even to the exterior action. Thus to take pleasure in a thought of revenge, or to desire it, is an interior sin, or a sin of thought; actually to put in execution the same revenge either by word or deed, is an exterior sin, or a sin of action.

Many penitents, who are not well instructed, confess what they have said or done, but never excuse themselves of their sinful thoughts as long as they have not proceeded to the action. How

ever it is most certain, that interior sins are the first sins, and very criminal in the sight of God; exterior sins are not sins, but in as much as they proceed from the heart, that is, from the will, which is the source of the good and evil we do. It is the will that causes all the evil which is found in our actions, they are not wicked, but in as much as they are ordered and consented to by the will.

*The malice of exterior sins proceeds from the heart.*

Our Saviour says, that the heart is the fountain of our sins: *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication\**. And the wise man says, *six things the Lord hateth, a heart that deviseth wicked plots, &c.†*. And, *perverse thoughts separate from God‡*.

Accuse yourself then of the sins of thought, when you have committed them, although you have not put them in execution; nay even when afterwards you have retracted them in your heart, for this retraction does not prevent the evil from having been consented to in thought; and although it would have been far greater if you had actually put it in execution, yet to have only desired it, ceases not to be very atrocious.

There are three degrees in these sins of thought: the first is complacency, the second desire, and the third the resolution. *Three degrees in sins of thought.*

Complacency in an evil thought, is a mortal sin, if it be voluntary, and if the thing one thinks on be in itself a mortal sin; as an impure action, a severe revenge, or the like.

The desire, which frequently follows the complacency, is also a mortal sin in the two circumstances above-mentioned, when it tends voluntarily to a thing mortally evil. We see it is forbidden by the two last commandments of the law of God. Now if you would know what is meant by a desire: "A desire is a conditional will, or a will to do the evil if it lay in our power, and if we had an opportunity."

The resolution to do the evil is also a mortal sin, and greater than the other two, and must be confessed, although it were not put in execution, and even although we have retracted and changed our resolution, as we said before.

## CHAP.

\* Mat. xv. 19. † Prov. vi. 16, 18. ‡ Wisd. i. 3.

## C H A P. XIII.

*Of sins of commission and omission.*

**T**HIS difference of sins is also very necessary to be known, as well for confession, as for the conduct of a Christian life.

Sins that consist in action are easily known, confessed, and avoided; but sins of omission are hardly understood, seldom confessed, and scarcely avoided; they arise from a neglect of those duties which we are obliged to perform.

*Sins of omission* Yet this sin is often as great as that of commission: we shall be equally damned for not doing that which we are obliged to do, as for committing the evil that is forbidden us. The law of God, *Theotime*, whereof sin is a transgression, does not only forbid evil, but also commands good. Some of its precepts are negative, and forbid evil, as those, *Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal*. Others are conceived in positive terms, and command some good; as those, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God: Keep holy the sabbath day*.

Each commandment in reality is both positive and negative: for those which command a good, forbid the opposite evil; and those that prohibit an evil, command the contrary good. For example, the precept which commands us to love God, forbids us to do any thing that displeases him: and the commandment that prohibits robbing, obliges making restitution of what is unjustly taken away; and thus of others. There is no commandment against which one may not sin both by commission and omission.

Hence there is an indispensable obligation to examine ourselves upon the sins of omission, as well as commission; we must accuse ourselves not only of the evil actions we have done, but also of the duties we have left undone.

In the examination which we shall give you hereafter, we shall put down the sins of omission together with the sins of commission against each commandment.

Above all we must carefully examine these sins of omission when we search into the sins which belong to our particular state of life. Each state and condition has peculiar obligations annexed to it, and to which we are strictly bound either by law, or by covenant, or by oath, or by the very nature of the calling. Many Christians are guilty of considerable omissions, of their respective duties, which are highly criminal, though they are not always observed.

observed as they should be, by those who often fall into them. Hence at the hour of death many sins will be brought to light, which careless souls in the time of this life but little apprehended, and so continued till death in the guilt of them.

C H A P. XIV.

*Of the sins of ignorance, frailty, and malice.*

**I** ADD here this distinction of sins, because it conduces very much to make us understand the quality of them, and how to form a better judgment of their enormity.

This distinction springs from the nature of *No sin without* *knowledge, and a* *power of not sin-*  
 1. which is a *voluntary*, and *free* action: as *knowledge, and a*  
 2. it is *voluntary*, it must be performed *knowingly*: *power of not sin-*  
 3. as it is *free*, it must be done in such a manner, *ning.*  
 4. *that the will might not have done it.* Knowledge

is hindered by ignorance; *the power of not doing it*, is hindered by  
 passions, which carry the will on to do evil, or withdraw it from  
 good: I say hindered, that is, either diminished, or totally taken  
 away. When knowledge is wanting, it is a sin of *ignorance*; when  
 the power of not doing is incumbered by passion, it is a sin of  
*frailty*; but when we are free both from the one and the other,  
 as well as ignorance, then it is a sin which proceeds from  
 the will alone, and is called a sin of *malice*, that is, of the will  
 acting with full knowledge, and of her own accord, without being  
 pushed on or clogged by any passion.

You should be well instructed in this point, *Theotime*, because  
 the greatest part of the world excuse their sins either upon account  
 of their ignorance, or weakness. It is true, there is sometimes  
 ignorance or passion in their sins, but they must not excuse them-  
 selves for that. I am about to convince you that neither igno-  
 rance nor passion do always lessen them, but that the greatest part  
 of their sins are sins of malice.

A R T I C L E I.

*Of the sins of ignorance.*

**A** SIN of ignorance is what we commit for want of sufficient  
 knowledge either of the action that we perform, or of the  
 which there is in such an action.

ol. II.

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Ignorance



Ignorance of the action, is called ignorance of the fact. Ignorance of the evil which is in the action, is called ignorance of the law; of which we may be ignorant two ways, either totally, or in part: totally, when we believe there is no ill in the action; in part, when we believe indeed there is some, but not so much evil, as in effect there is. We may be subject to ignorance either by our fault and our will, or without any fault or will on our side.

It happens by our fault, when we are willing to be ignorant of a thing, whether expressly and on set purpose endeavouring to avoid information; or implicitly by a supine negligence, when careless about learning what we ought to know.

It happens without any fault of ours, when there is neither an express will, nor any considerable negligence on our part, and it is not our fault that we are not instructed in it.

This being supposed, it is easy to tell when ignorance lessens the sin, when it takes it away totally, and when not at all.

*What ignorance removes or lessens guilt.*

First, when such ignorance does not proceed at all from our fault, either directly or indirectly, it is certain it takes away the sin totally, and the action we do is not a sin; because there is no sin without a will, and there is no will where there is no knowledge. Thus when Noah was intoxicated with wine, his excess in drink was not a sin, because he neither did nor could know its strength.

Secondly, when ignorance proceeds from our fault by an express will, or gross negligence, it neither takes away, nor even lessens the sin; on the contrary, it rather encreases the guilt. Because he that desires the cause, desires also the effect. If then I desire, and am not unwilling to be ignorant of the evil that is in an action, and it happens by that ignorance that I sin more freely, and without remorse, I am the voluntary cause of the sin, the enormity of which I would not know. Such was the ignorance of the unchaste old men in the history of *Susanna*, of whom it is said, *That they cast down their eyes, that they might not see heaven, nor remember the judgments of God* \*. Such is the ignorance of those that will not be instructed in what they ought to know, nor admonished of the evil they do, and who will not understand that they may do well †.

Third

\* Dan. xiii. 9. † Psal. xxxv. 4.

Thirdly, as the total ignorance of the evil of an action takes away all the sin, when it does not proceed from our fault; so the ignorance of part of the evil which is in a sin takes away part of its guilt; that is, lessens the sin: this is to be understood of that ignorance which does not proceed from our fault, and when it was not in our power to be better instructed. Such is the ignorance of young people when they first fall into sins of impurity. They know well enough that they are sins, as appears by the doubts they have in their conscience, and by the shame they have to confess them: but they do not understand that their malignity is so great as in reality they are, until they are instructed; till then their sins are not so great, although they are almost always mortal sins. This shows the necessity of their being well instructed concerning such sins, that they may conceive a due horror, and avoid them to the utmost of their power,

## A R T I C L E II.

### *Of sins of frailty.*

THE sins of frailty are those which proceed from the will moved by some passion.

Passions are actions of the sensitive appetite, which is an inferior part of the soul, and moves towards things forbidden by the law of God; such are love, hatred, sadness, fear, anger. Some push on the soul to do what is forbidden, as love, hatred, joy, choler; others withdraw it from doing the good which is commanded, as fear, sadness, despair; those cause sins of action, these sins of omission.

Passions diminish the liberty of the will, because being pushed on, or restrained by other causes than by herself, she has not her own dominion over that action, either to do, or not do what she wills. Besides, these passions diminish also the judgment, hindering the understanding, which guides the will, from judging of things so clearly as otherwise it would.

They diminish by consequence the sin which is found in an action or omission, and this differently; sometimes less, sometimes more, and sometimes totally; at other times so far from diminishing, they rather encrease it.

They diminish sometimes but little, when *When passions* they are but light, and the will may easily *diminish or take* overcome them.

*away the guilt of* They diminish the sin much, when they are *sin.* strong and violent, because for that time they notoriously diminish the judgment and liberty; however, as long as they leave man the knowledge of the evil which he does, the sin continues still in some degree.

They totally take away the sin, when they are so violent, that they totally cloud the reason, so that one does not perceive at all that there is a sin, which never happens but in the first motions of passion, which being a little appeased, the mind returns to itself, and knows what it has done, and from thence-forward one sins if he continues in his passion.

But passions do not at all diminish the sin when they are voluntary, and when they are wilfully raised, entertained, or cherished, as it happens too often, in which case they are not sins of frailty, but of malice.

### A R T I C L E III.

#### *Of sins of malice.*

**B**Y sins of malice we do not understand here, sins which are maliciously committed, whether purely to displease God, or for the mere pleasure which one takes in doing ill: these sins are rather sins of Devils than men. Those who are so unfortunate as to commit such sins, begin in this world to live the life of Devils which God often punishes also with the punishment of Devils which are obstinacy and impenitence. These are the sins which our Saviour calls *Sins against the Holy Ghost*, which are *neither forgiven in this world nor the next* \*.

Sins of malice, whereof I speak in this place, are those which are committed without *Sins of malice* explained. ignorance, and without passion, that is, without full knowledge and entire liberty. They are called sins of malice, because being committed neither out of ignorance nor passion, they proceed only from the evil inclination of the will, which scruples not to offend God, provided it can compass the enjoyment of its pleasures, or other sensible content which it seeks in sin.

These

\* Mat. xii. 32.

These sins are very great, and highly displeasing in the sight of God, having nothing to excuse them, as the two former have. These we must confess very exactly, specifying the circumstance, that we committed them with full knowledge and on set purpose. It is also necessary that we undergo some severe penance for them.

As these sins are great, they ought to be rare and unheard of, although unhappily they are too common amongst Christians. If the lives of men were nicely searched into, the greatest part of their sins would be found to be sins of malice, in the sense we have used the word, that is, sins proceeding neither from ignorance nor passion.

For as to ignorance, though much of it is found among the ordinary sins of men, and for that reason it is said, that every man that sins is ignorant: how often does it happen, that their ignorance is voluntary? They purposely affect to be ignorant; they wish to be ignorant of that which they are obliged to know; they are unwilling to be instructed; they fear to look too narrowly into their own actions, and to be obliged to do good from the knowledge they shall have of it. Is not this deliberately to consent to the sin, and out of malice? For this reason they shun every means of instruction, as reading books and sermons, or among preachers they dislike those that reprehend vice; they shun the most able spiritual guides, and seek the less understanding, and most indulgent; they consult no one concerning their doubts of conscience; at least they do not unfold their interior with candour and sincerity; they seek after favourable answers to indulge themselves in remis practices, and false opinions; thus they frame a specious conscience, to sin with more liberty. What is this but wilfully to run into a precipice, and shut their eyes that they may cast themselves headlong the more readily, and without fear? Will any one pretend, that an action proceeding from such a wilful ignorance, is not a sin of malice, when persons refuse to know the evil, that they may be under less restraint?

As for passions, we must say the same of them as of ignorance, they diminish sin when they are not voluntary; but when we purposely seek them, or industriously cherish or encrease them, these are not sins of passion, but of malice, since they are deliberate effects of a will running on to wickedness, and employing its passion as a means of encreasing its pleasure. Now how common is this among men! He that has a desire of revenge, does he not



endeavour to nourish his hatred and indignation against his enemy? He speaks against him on all occasions, and is pleased with hearing others speak against him.

He whose heart is possess'd with impure love does all he can to indulge it; he applies his care and thoughts that way; all his senses are employed therein, as his eyes, ears, tongue, touch; he lets no opportunities slip; he searches after them with much care and sollicitude; he follows all the motions of his passion without opposition, or putting the least restraint upon himself. What is sinning on set purpose, and with an affected malice, if this be not? Thus running over the greatest part of the sins of men, we shall find that they principally spring from the will, and men are vicious because they have a mind to be so.

Hence beware, *Theotime*, of flattering yourself in your sins because you are young. Plead neither the ignorance of your youth, nor the violence of your passions as an excuse for your guilt; for remember that you make your ignorance and passion voluntary, because you will not learn the truths you ought to know, nor search after the means of restraining or conquering your passions; so that your sins proceed from the inclination you have to ill, which you will not correct, and thus the greatest part of your sins are sins of malice, rather than sins of passion or ignorance.

#### A R T I C L E IV.

*Of sins which spring from a vicious habit.*

**I** ADD here this fourth article, forasmuch as next to ignorance and passion, there is another cause which draws the will to sin, and seems to diminish it, *viz.* a vicious habit, that is, an inclination or easiness to fall into a sin, contracted by often repeated acts of the same sin; for it is the property of acts to produce suitable habits.

When this habit is become strong and inveterate, it causes us to fall into sin without either ignorance or passion; witness those who swear upon all occasions, who have their mind always full of evil thoughts, who have nothing in their mouth but immoderate words, and so of others.

This inclination is sometimes so great, that it draws after it a kind of necessity to fall into evil: as St. *Augustine* says in his confessions, deploring the unfortunate experience he had of it

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"The will, (says he) when once depraved, begets an inclination to ill: the inclination produces a habit; a habit when not resisted becomes a necessity." Yet this necessity does not take away the sin, because it does not take away the liberty of the will, which is always mistress of her habit, and which by means of grace may overcome it. If you ask whether a vitious habit lessens the sin? I answer, that of itself it does not, because it was freely contracted by the will, and it is in her power to overcome it.

Hence to judge whether a vitious habit diminishes the sin, we must consider how the will is affected in respect of the habit, that is, *When an ill habit lessens guilt.* whether she be displeased, whether she be afflicted, whether she make any endeavours to correct herself, and to be freed from it. For in this case the habit without doubt lessens the sin, and when one falls therein, he is more excusable in the sight of God; and if the sin be mortal, it is less grievous than if it were committed without habit.

But if he who has contracted a vitious habit does not strive to amend, his sins are nothing less for being committed through a habit. Then they are no more sins of frailty, but become sins of malice, because he willingly nourishes the cause that produces them. And as he does not earnestly desire to correct his vitious habit, he is reasonably supposed to consent to all the sins that spring from thence.

Take great notice of this rule, *Theotime*, that you may be able to judge aright of the quality of the sins which you commit by habit, and do not easily excuse yourself upon this account. They frequently proceed from your own fault and will.

## CHAPTER XV.

*Of sins that are committed through error or doubt.*

THESE also are two other sources of sin, necessary to be known and examined into, by reason of the great number of sins that spring from them.

We here call that an error, when one believes there is a sin in the action or omission, when in reality there is none, or that it is a mortal, when it is but a venial sin.

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If

\* Lib. 3. cap. 5.

If it be asked, whether an action or omission, performed in such error is a sin? Without doubt it is, and ought to be confessed, and diligent care must be had for the future, in regard to the like occasions. Because sin consists in the will, and the will acts not but as it is guided by the judgment. When the judgment proposes a thing as evil, whether it be an action or omission, if the will embraces it, she consents to it as evil, in as much as she knows it in no other light, and sins as if the thing were evil in effect; because the sin does not consist in the effect, but in the affection. This is the reason why we say that an erroneous conscience obliges, that is, when we believe that it is ill to do, or omit an action, we are obliged to follow that belief, although false, till such time as we shall be informed of the truth.

Mark this well, dear *Theotime*, for two reasons. First, that you may avoid sinning thus by error, which happens but too often to young people, who believe frequently that actions or omissions are sins, when they are not, and who nevertheless commit them. You ought steadfastly to follow this rule, never to perform an action or omission which you believe to be a sin.

Secondly, that you may apply this truth to your confession in which you ought to examine into the sins you have committed through error. In order to judge of the sin you have committed whether action or omission, do not only examine whether it were a mortal sin in itself or not; but, whether you did not believe it was a mortal sin: for then it must be confessed as if it were mortal sin.

Perhaps you will draw from hence a consequence in your own favour. If then, you will say, I judge either an action or omission to be lawful, and exempt from sin, although in effect it be not; it follows, that I shall not sin at all in committing it.

I answer, that this is sometimes true, and sometimes otherwise. It is true, when this erroneous judgment proceeds from an innocent ignorance, or where there was no fault at all of ours, or that it was not in our power to be better instructed: but if this error arises from a culpable ignorance, and because we would not be better informed, as it often happens; in this case it does not at all excuse the sin, as it is said above, Chap. XIV. Art. I.

With respect to doubt, this also is very often the cause of sin, and it concerns us to know it. *When doubt makes an action sinful.* We call that a doubt, when one is uncertain whether an action or omission be a sin or not.

This doubt is either great or small, or betwixt both: great, when it inclines the judgment to determine that it is a sin: small, when it rather resolves that it is not: mean or betwixt both, when it hangs in suspense, and we know not on which side to incline the balance: hence it is easy to tell when a doubt makes an action sinful, and when not.

A very strong doubt makes an action, or omission a sin, because it is equivalent to a judgment.

A light doubt does not make a thing to be a sin, in as much as it does not at all destroy the contrary belief, by which one thinks there is no sin in it.

As for the doubt which is in the middle betwixt these two, and which leaves the judgment in a total uncertainty, neither being able to affirm nor deny, it is so far from excusing from sin, that he, who in this doubt resolves to do an action or omission, which he doubts whether it be a mortal sin or not, sins mortally: the reason is, because acting under that formal doubt, he is supposed to desire it, such as it might be in itself, and as it might be evil, he was resolved to do it in case it were so. This deserves to be carefully remembered.

## C H A P. XVI.

*Of the sins which we commit in others.*

**W**E are not only guilty of those sins which we commit by ourselves, but also of those which we commit by others, that is, of sins which others commit through our fault.

These sins are often very heinous, and of fatal consequence. These are those of which *David* speaks, when he says: *Cleanse me, O Lord, from my hidden sins, and pardon thy servant from those which I commit in others\**. Yet there is nothing more common among men, nor of which they take less care, for want of sufficient knowledge or understanding of the different ways by which one may concur to another's sin. Wherefore I shall here treat of them briefly.

To

\* Psal. xviii. 13.



*How we become  
guilty of another  
person's sin.*

To sin by another, is to be the voluntary and faulty cause of the sin which another commits. I say, voluntary and faulty, because if we are the cause of the sin of another, without our fault, we do not sin.

Now we may be the cause of the sin of another two ways, positively and negatively, by action or by omission. By action, when we do or say something which induces our neighbour to sin. By omission, when we fail to say or do something that might hinder our neighbour from offending God.

I said when we do or say, to denote two ways whereby we may cause sin in another positively, viz. by our actions and by our words. By our actions, which give ill example to our neighbour, or an occasion to offend God. By words, which induce others to sin.

The first way is called the sin of scandal; the second an inducement to evil. The first happens as often as we do any action, which is either wicked, or esteemed so, when we know, or ought to know, that it will be the cause of our neighbour offending God.

The second happens different ways, viz. by teaching, commanding, concealing, and soliciting to sin by entreaties, threats, &c.

The one and the other of these ways are very common among men, and probably are the cause of the greatest part of those sins which are daily committed. The Son of God says: *Wo to the world because of scandals. It is indeed necessary that scandals come nevertheless wo to that man by whom scandal cometh\**. His meaning is; it is a great misfortune, that the world should be filled with scandals, and a most lamentable case for him who causes the scandal; *it were better for a man to have a mill-stone tied to his neck and cast into the bottom of the sea, than to give scandal to his neighbour, that is, than to make him fall into sin.*

Besides this way of positively contributing to the sin of another by actions or words, there is another, which we may call negative, which happens when any one refrains from doing or saying something which might hinder our neighbour from offending God. For not to hinder sin when we may, is to be the cause of the sin of another. This happens in many cases, of which we shall discourse hereafter at the end of the examen of sins.

\* Mat. xviii. 7.

TABLE of SINS,

*Which may serve for an explanation of the Ten Commandments, the chief precepts of the church, and the seven deadly sins : or for an examination of conscience proper for a general confession.*

**S**IN being a transgression against the law of God, it follows, that to understand well in what we have sinned, we must first know what God commands and what he forbids by each commandment : therefore to examine our conscience rightly, it is necessary to go through the commandments as they stand in order, and see whether and how many ways we have transgressed them.

*The FIRST COMMANDMENT.*

*I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them\*.*

*The First Commandment is broken, first, by Sins against Faith : as,*

**B**Y being ignorant of the principal mysteries of christianity, or of the creed, of the commandments of God, of the precepts of the church, or of the sacraments. 2. By wilfully doubting or obstinately erring in any point of faith. 3. By denying our religion in word or deed ; by going to the churches or meetings of heretics, so as to join any way with them in their worship or to give scandal. By having delayed embracing the true faith, for human respects, interest, fear, &c. 4. By favouring heretics, or wicked men, in supporting and approving what they do ; or making close connections with such, as will probably hinder you from the practice of your religion. 5. By reading their books either with pleasure or danger. 6. By examining with curiosity divine mysteries and secrets of providence by pure human reason. 7. By contemning or deriding holy things, or profaning the sacraments. 8. By abusing the words of holy scripture, by applying them to wicked or profane senses, making them serve for jests, or other ill uses. 9. By desiring to know things to come, which be-  
longs

\* Exodus xx. 2, 3, 4, 5.

longs to God only; or things past or present, which are hid from us; and by employing for this end unlawful means, as *magicians, fortune-tellers*, or other superstitious inventions. 10. By giving credit to dreams, or making superstitious observations; by employing prayers or sacred things to ill uses; by using charms or other inventions to make persons fall in love with us, to cure diseases, or to do any damage to our neighbour or his goods.

*Secondly, by Sins against Hope, as,*

1. By distrusting in the mercies of God, or despairing of pardon of one's sins. 2. By presuming on God's goodness without any concern of amendment. 3. By deferring one's conversion or repentance till the end of life. 4. By exposing one's self to any danger of offending God, either by company, reading, or otherways, which is called tempting God. 5. By exposing one's self without necessity to some corporal danger, as sickness, wounds or death. 6. By neglecting the remedies God has appointed in these dangers, as of physic for the body, prayer and the sacraments for the soul.

*Thirdly, by Sins against Charity: as,*

1. By not loving God above all things, but rather chusing wilfully to offend him, than suffer some loss, as to honours, riches &c. 2. By preferring the love of men before the love of God; as to offend God for fear of displeasing men, or of being jeered or slighted. 3. By omitting a duty for shame, or other temporal respect. 4. By thinking seldom of God; by being ashamed to speak of him; by not hearkening to his inspirations; by forgetting his benefits, or neglecting to give him thanks.

*Fourthly, by Sins against the Virtue of Religion; as,*

1. By not adoring God, or praying to him; or doing it very seldom. 2. By praying without attention, and with wilful distractions. 3. By being wanting in our respect to God in time of prayer; by talking in holy places, and being there without due modesty and gravity, either in looks, words, or actions.

*Fifthly, by Sins against the Care we are bound to have of our own salvation; as,*

1. By the love of idleness, in chusing rather to do nothing than be employed in any commendable exercise; which is a sin that carries

carries a train of many others after it. 2. By being too solicitous in temporal concerns, and neglecting the means of salvation. 3. By deferring amendment of life, or immediately desisting after having begun it. 4. By neglecting the means of salvation; as the sacraments, prayers, good works, or using them without devotion. 5. By receiving any sacrament without due preparation or in mortal sin.

SECOND COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

*The Second Commandment is broken,*

**B**Y the ill custom of taking God's name in vain. 2. By swearing what one knows or doubts to be false. 3. By swearing what is unjust, or prejudicial to others. N. B. When one swears to do an evil thing, the oath does not oblige; but it was a mortal sin to swear, and it would be another to fulfil that oath. 4. By swearing without necessity, though the thing be true and just. 5. By blaspheming God, or holy things. It is blasphemy to vilify Almighty God, either by denying him some perfection, or by attributing to him what is unworthy of him. It is also a kind of blasphemy to swear by the death of God, by his blood, by his wounds, when such words are uttered with contempt or reproach. 6. By cursing one's self, or others, or any of God's creatures, or taking pleasure in hearing others swear or curse, or provoking them to it; 7. or not reprehending them when we may and ought. 8. By making a vow to do what is impossible to fulfil; or to do what is evil or displeasing to God; or to do what one never intends to perform. 9. By breaking lawful vows, or deferring to fulfil them without just cause.

THIRD COMMANDMENT.

*Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.*

*The Third Commandment is broken,*

**B**Y doing servile works on the *Sunday*, or causing others to do the like, without a considerable necessity. 2. By employing a considerable part of the *Sunday* in temporal affairs, as those of merchants, advocates, solicitors, &c. 3. By profaning *Sundays*, spending them in idleness, gaming, dances, feasting, and other recreations. 4. By not sanctifying a considerable part of these



these days in reading good books, praying, and other religious duties, or not taking care that those under your charge do the like.

#### FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

*Honour thy father and thy mother.*

*The Fourth Commandment is broken,*

**I. BY** children not giving due respect to their parents; or by despising them, either in their heart or actions. 2. By not loving them, but wishing their death, or other misfortunes; and forsaking them in their necessities. 3. By not obeying them, or not doing it readily; or by obeying them in things unlawful. 4. By misemploying the time allotted to studies, or to the learning of some trade or profession; or by causing others to be idle or remiss. 5. By squandering what parents allowed for prudent use. 6. By slighting their reprehensions, and resisting their corrections. 7. By putting them into passion, and not taking care to pacify them. 8. By not executing their last will and testament, or delaying to do it.

**II. By** servants and other inferiors. 1. In disobeying their masters, or other lawful superiors, civil, or ecclesiastical. 2. By failing in their trust, or diligence that is required at their hands. 3. By neglecting the reasonable and just interest of their masters. 4. By letting their master suffer in any kind, through their sloth, neglect, &c. 5. By obeying them in things unlawful, as lying, swearing, stealing, &c.

**III. By** parents in not performing their duty towards their children. 1. In not loving them, and supplying them in their corporal necessities. 2. In not being careful of their salvation. 3. In not correcting them when they stand in need; in flattering them their passions; or indulging them in their evil inclination. 4. In being too severe to them. 5. In not giving them good example. 6. In forcing them to the choice of their state of life.

**IV. By** masters, and other superiors. 1. In not having due care of their servants, or those entrusted to their charge, as to their life and conversation. 2. In not being watchful over them, reprehend their faults; make them say their prayers; go to mass on *Sundays* and holidays; frequent the sacraments. 3. In commanding them to do some evil. 4. In treating them too rudely and injuriously. 5. In not duly paying them their wages.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not kill.*

*The Fifth Commandment is broken,*

1. **B**Y anger, quarrelling, threatening, by injurious or reproachful words or actions against our neighbours. 2. By revenge, or deliberate thoughts or desires of revenge. 3. By provoking, striking, challenging, wounding, or being the cause of another's death. 4. By causing or advising an abortion. 5. By keeping ill-will, bearing malice, refusing to salute, or speak to any neighbour out of hatred or aversion, or refusing to be reconciled. 6. By indulging our pleasures to the impairing of our health.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

*The Sixth Commandment is broken,*

1. **B**Y the *hearing*. 1. In willingly giving ear to immodest words, discourses, songs. 2. By taking pleasure therein. 3. By not hindering or discouraging them, when one may. 4. By not avoiding the company of those that speak them.

II. By the *fight*. 1. In looking on immodest objects, as on nakedness and dishonest pictures, figures, &c. 2. In reading dishonest books; in keeping them; lending them to others; or neglecting to suppress them when one may.

III. By the *tongue*. 1. speaking immodest words, or such as bearing a double sense are apt to create impure thoughts in others. 2. In relating wanton stories, or wicked actions of himself or others. 3. By singing unchaste songs, or reciting immodest verses. 4. By soliciting others to any sort of impurity.

IV. By the *touch*, in using indecent actions, or touching himself or others immodestly.

V. By *thoughts*. 1. By willingly, and with delight, entertaining impure thoughts. 2. Desiring to commit the sins thought on. 3. In resolving to commit them.

VI. By *immodest actions*. 1. In occasioning pollution in himself or others. 2. In committing the sin of dishonesty, and whether affected by soliciting, seducing with promises, or forcing: and whether it be fornication, adultery or incest. 3. In sins against nature.

nature. Married persons ought to examine whether they have not abused the liberty of their state.

### SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not steal.*

*The Seventh Commandment is broken,*

1. **BY** taking another's goods; the sin encreasing in proportion to their value. 2. By retaining what one knows belongs to another; or by appropriating to one's self things found without seeking after the owner. 3. By denying one's debts, or wilfully delaying the payment, to the prejudice of a neighbour. 4. By making unjust bargains or contracts; and in this every trade and profession ought to make a strict enquiry. 5. By causing any damage to a neighbour. 6. By putting off false and not current money. 7. By desiring another's goods. 8. By not giving alms when necessity requires. 9. By simony. 10. By usury. All injustice requires an adequate reparation.

### EIGHT COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

*The Eight Commandment is broken,*

1. **BY** witnessing what is false, especially if the charge be heinous; or by defending a false accusation, as in lawyers and solicitors; or by condemning the innocent, or discharging the guilty, as in judges and arbitrators. 2. By detraction, either in our own mind, by ill-grounded suspicion, or rash judgment, or in uttering our sentiments, by laying something false to another's charge, or reporting for truth what is only doubtful, or revealing something yet secret and unknown, though true, in prejudice to some third person. In this sin we must notice whether it was done out of lightness and indiscretion, or out of malice and ill will; and whether in presence of many persons, and whether in a matter of great concern. 3. By lying, which is speaking a thing we judge to be otherwise than we say. It should be observed whether one has a custom of it, or does it to the considerable prejudice of others. 4. By hypocrisy, which is a lie in action.

NINTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.*

TENTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.*

*The Ninth and Tenth Commandments are broken,*

**B**Y all unlawful and wilful desires in regard of impurity and theft; which are already set down in the sixth and seventh commandments.

*The precepts of the Church are broken,*

**B**Y not keeping certain appointed days holy; or by doing, or causing others to do unnecessary servile work thereon; or by omitting to hear mass on a Sunday or a holiday, or not hearing it with attention and devotion. 2. By not observing the commanded days of abstinence and fasting. 3. By not confessing our sins to our pastor at least once a year; or by rendering our yearly confession invalid for want of due dispositions. 4. By not receiving the Blessed Sacrament at Easter, or thereabouts; or making our Easter-communion Sacrilegious. 5. By not paying tythes to our pastor. 6. By solemnizing marriage at forbidden times; or by marrying within the prohibited degrees of kindred, or without necessities.

*Of the Seven deadly Sins.*

*The Sins of Pride are;*

**I**N taking pleasure in thinking too well of one's self, and valuing himself above desert. 2. In publishing what he esteems good in himself, that he may be esteemed by others. 3. In arrogance, attributing to himself the goods he has not. 4. In presumption and ambition, by confiding too much in his own strength, conceiving himself capable of things above him, and rashly seeking them. 5. In contempt of others, by reason of the good opinion one has of himself; and when one shews this contempt by words or actions, and by being severe, and exacting on inferiors. 6. In wanting due submission to superiors, by disobeying them, blaming their conduct, or murmuring against them. 7. In not acknowledging faults; or when confessing the fact, one maintains he has done well, or at least alledges false excuses. 8. In contempt of admonitions and corrections. 9. In obstinacy in one's own opi-

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nion.



nion. 10. In discord. 11. In hypocrisy. 12. In curiosity, which inclines us to know things prejudicial to our salvation. 13. In ingratitude for God's benefits.

The sins of *covetousness*, *luxury*, and *sloth*, have been examined above, in the first, sixth, and seventh commandments.

*The Sins of Gluttony, are,*

In eating or drinking to excess, as far as they are prejudicial either to our health or our reason, or any way scandalous, or of example to others.

*The Sins of Envy, are,*

1. Trouble at the good success of one's neighbour, or when one endeavours or wishes to do him a diskindness, or speaks off against him, to diminish the esteem others have of him, or to create in them an ill opinion of him. 2. When one rejoices at a neighbour's harm.

*The Sins of Anger, are,*

1. Not to endure any thing contrary to our inclinations. To suffer one's self to be carried away by the motions of wrath against those that give us any trouble. 3. To proceed to quarrel, injurious language, oaths, curses, threats; to revenge one's self, or to desire and wish to be in a capacity of doing it. 4. Not to pardon injuries, or be reconciled to enemies, or with such of our neighbours, with whom one has had some misunderstanding, falling out.

*The Examination of sins, which one commits in the person of another.*

1. **I**N doing an evil action, or what is esteemed to be so, in the presence of others; and more especially, if it be done with design to stir up others to sin. 2. By compelling them to evil by some force. 3. In giving aid or assistance towards a wicked action, by money or otherwise. 4. In harbouring or concealing bad people, that they may not be discovered or punished. 5. Sharing in any evil, whether it be in the action itself, or in the profit arising. 6. In not hindering evil when one may. 7. Teaching one evil which he knew not before. 8. By commanding, counselling, soliciting, threatening, or otherwise provoking another to ill. 9. By approving evil actions, and praising them when

them. 10. By bragging of sins he has committed, or of such as he never did. 11. By slighting the good deeds of others, or any ways exposing them to scoffing or scorn. 12. By sowing discord amongst others, either by false or true reports; and by endeavouring to keep up a misunderstanding amongst them. 13. By not instructing those under one's care; nor reprehending or chastising them when necessity requires, but permitting them to live as they please. 14. By not giving fraternal correction, and charitable admonitions for the preventing of evil.

N. B. The circumstance of scandal, is generally found in all sins that are known to others.

There are, besides these, particular sins belonging to every state, trade, profession, and calling, upon which every one ought to bring himself to an account, and see how far he has been wanting in any part of his duty. And every one should remember that no custom or common practice, how general soever, can justify what the law of God forbids. Hence cunningly over-reaching our neighbour is not superiority of wisdom, but injustice; and hence knowingly to sell damaged wares as unhurt; to pilfer what the sufferers would not allow; and other secret practices which we should condemn in others, must be avoided by a pure conscience.

## PART IV. Of SATISFACTION.

### CHAP. I.

*What satisfaction is.*

Satisfaction, the third part of penance, consists in doing or suffering something to repair in some manner the offence or injury which is done to God by sin.

I say to repair in some manner, because the great reparation for sin was performed by the Son of God, who by his precious blood and death has superabundantly repaired the injury which sin did to God, and merited a general pardon of all the punishments that divine justice could require.

This reparation has opened and facilitated a way to a reconciliation with God after sin. For as much as the merits of our Savi-

our being applied to us, (as they are by the sacraments of baptism and penance) restore us again to the grace of God, which we had lost, and make us receive the remission of the eternal punishment due to our sins. All this is through the merits of *Jesus Christ*, and by virtue of the satisfaction which he has given to God the Father for the same sins. A satisfaction, without which we should always have remained incapable of satisfying God, and by consequence of ever returning again into his grace and favour.

But as it is in his power, who receives another again into his favour, by whom he has been offended, to admit him on such conditions as he shall think fit; and either to remit him all the punishment, or to oblige him to undergo only part of it; it has pleased the divine wisdom, in respect of us, to make use of both the one and the other of these two ways of reconciliation, though more ordinarily of the second.

For in baptism he receives us into his grace. *Temporal punishment* and remits us all the punishment due to our sins. In penance he remits us indeed the eternal punishment, but still reserves some temporal chastisement to be suffered by the penitent to the end that he may satisfy on his part according to his power, and for other reasons which we shall speak of hereafter.

In the undergoing of this temporal chastisement, consists the satisfaction whereof we speak in this place, which is the third part of penance.

## C H A P. II.

*God pardoning sin, yet inflicts a temporal punishment.*

**W**HEN God pardoned the first man his sin, it was upon condition that he should do penance for the same by labour to which God condemned him; and indeed it was a very severe penance, as it was not to end but with life.

When God pardoned *David*, his sins of adultery and murder he told him by his prophet *Nathan*, that he should be chastised by the death of his child. God remitted him none of the many afflictions with which he threatened him by the same prophet these were that the sword should never depart from his house

that he himself should be eye witness to the dishonour of his family and dissension among his children, besides other misfortunes.

For this reason the penitents of the Old Testament, when they begged of God pardon of their sins, never asked to be exempt from all punishment, but only not to be chastised according to the rigour of divine justice. They desired to avoid his fury, and the more signal effects of his wrath, yet they submitted themselves to the fatherly correction he should be pleased to impose upon them. *Rebuke me not, O Lord, said David, in thy indignation; nor chastise me in thy wrath\**. A little after he declares, that he is ready to do penance, and to suffer for his sins: *I am ready, says he, for scourges†*. The Prophet *Jeremias* begs of God that he will correct him, *but not in his fury‡*.

These and many like examples shew evidently that God does not pardon sins, but upon condition of doing penance; and that the penitents of that time never pretended, nor required to be exempt from suffering for their sins.

Yea, even some of the most enlightened among them having founded into the depth of the punishment which God has reserved to himself in the other life, discovered that God punished after death even the sins of the just, which had not been sufficiently expiated during life. *Judas Machabeus*, not only a great captain, but also high priest of the law, after a signal victory, sent orders to *Jerusalem* to offer sacrifice for the sins of the faithful, who had been slain in battle. The scripture approves that action, as *an holy and wholesome thought§*; assuring us, that by prayers and sacrifices the dead are loosed from their sins. But this cannot be understood of sin, as to the fault, or the eternal punishment, which cannot be remitted after death, no more than the fault from whence it springs. It must then be understood of the temporal punishment which the dead ought to satisfy for in the other life, and from which they may be released by the prayers and sacrifices of the living.

In the new law God has still holden the same conduct with regard to receiving Christians into his favour, by obliging them to some temporal punishment, and that with so much the more reason, as the law they profess being more holy and more perfect, ought to punish more rigorously the sins committed against it.

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\* Psalm cxxxvii. 1. † Psalm cxxxvii. 18. ‡ Jerem. x. 24. § 2 Mach. 46.



For this reason our Saviour says, that *in the day of judgment* we must *render an account for every idle word* \*. This sentence shall be passed after death, when we shall give an account of our sins, to receive the punishment thereof. This shall not be an eternal punishment, for they will not deserve it; it must then be a temporal punishment, which must be undergone, and by which we must satisfy in the other life, if we have not satisfied during this.

Hence the same Son of God, by giving to his Apostles power to remit and forgive sins, has also given that of binding sinners. This power of binding reaches to many things; but among others it contains the power of obliging penitents to make satisfaction for their sins; and in releasing them from the bonds of the guilt and eternal punishment, it imposes upon them a temporal punishment for the satisfaction of divine justice. Thus the church has always understood that power of binding, as the council of Trent has declared †. Pronouncing those accursed that hold the contrary ‡.

Hence the same church, which is infallible in the interpretation of the sentiments of her spouse, has always made use of this power from the Apostles down to this present time; having always received sinners unto the sacrament of penance, not till after imposing upon them wholesome penances for their sins. Accordingly she has made rules and canons, prescribing different penances for different kinds of sins.

### C H A P. III.

*Excellent reasons out of the council of Trent, to shew why God, remitting the sin by penance, obliges the penitent sinner to a temporal punishment.*

*1st reason.*

THE holy council of Trent draws the first reason from the strict equity of divine justice, which treats those in a different manner who are not guilty alike, for example, those who have sinned before baptism, and those who have offended after they have received it. As the former, they have sinned with more ignorance, and without having received so many graces as Christians have, God forgives by baptism not only all their sins, but also all the punishment which he might justly exact in satisfaction for them, granting them an entire pardon of all that is passed, in favour

\* Mat. xii. 36.

† Sess. 14. c. 8.

‡ Can. 15.

their first admission to the Christian religion: But he treats otherwise those who relapse into sin after baptism, whose faults are infinitely greater; because they then have a clearer knowledge of sin, and offend after they have been delivered from the slavery of sin and the Devil; after they have received the grace of the Holy Ghost, by which their soul became the dwelling-place of God; so that by sinning they violate the temple of God, and contristate the Holy Ghost, whom they banish from their soul. These reasons, which so much aggravate the sins of Christians, are also the cause why God does not pardon them with so much indulgence, but obliges the penitent to make some satisfaction.

“Certainly, (says the council\*) the equity of divine justice requires that he should deal otherwise with them, who before baptism have sinned through ignorance, than with them who by holy baptism have been delivered from the servitude of sin and the Devil, and after having received the gift of the Holy Ghost have not been afraid to violate the temple of God, and contristate his holy Spirit.”

From thence the council descends to the 2d reason. Second reason, drawn from the goodness of God, which imposes these punishments for our advantage. “It is very agreeable to the divine bounty not to remit our sins without obliging us to some satisfaction, lest by occasion of too much mildness we should think our sins less than they are; and from thence take occasion to fall into greater, and to become injurious and contumelious to the Holy Ghost, and draw upon ourselves the divine wrath in the day of wrath. For without doubt these satisfactory punishments have a wonderful virtue to divert penitents from sin, and serve as a bridle to restrain them and teach them to keep a stricter watch over themselves for the future. Besides, they cure those remains and disorders which sin had left in the soul, and root out the vitious habits contracted by a disorderly way of living.”

In these last words the council comprehends 3d reason. third reason, drawn from the wholesome effects which follow from satisfaction, which are the correction of past faults, and amendment of penitents for the future.

It adds two more reasons, viz. that the works of penance duly performed are a powerful means to avert the punishment which

4th & 5th reason.

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divine

\* Sess. 14. c. 8.

divine justice is ready to inflict upon us: and that by undergoing some temporal punishment for our sins, we resemble our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, who has suffered for our sins, and from whose merits our satisfactions derive all their force or efficacy, being assured that *if we suffer with him, we shall be also glorified with him* \*.

## C H A P. IV.

*Wherein satisfaction consists, and whether it be essential to the sacrament of penance.*

**W**E have already said that it consists in doing or suffering some painful thing, instead of the temporal punishment which God reserves to himself after the remission of sin.

This satisfaction may be performed two several ways, either in virtue of the sacrament by the imposition of the priest, or out of the sacrament by the devotion of the penitent.

That only which is imposed by the priest is sacramental, and makes a part of the sacrament of penance.

That which the penitent performs of his own accord, is an effect of the virtue of penance with which his heart is filled. Although this does not make a part of the sacrament, it is nevertheless very profitable and wholesome, yea often very necessary to supply the defects of the penance imposed by confessors, which generally falls very short of the punishment which their sins deserve in the sight of God.

It may be asked, whether sacramental satisfaction be essential to the sacrament of penance: that is to say, whether it be so necessary that without it the sacrament would be invalid as to the remission of sins.

To this we must answer by distinguishing between actual satisfaction, and a sincere will to satisfy: the first is not so essential to the sacrament, that without it the absolution would be null: being certain, that absolution may be given to a penitent before he has actually made any satisfaction imposed by the priest, as it is evident from the practice of the church.

But as to the will of satisfying God, it is necessary, that without it the absolution would be of no effect; because that will is inseparable from true contrition, and he who has it cannot have the necessary sorrow for his sin.

*Without the will of satisfying God, absolution is null.*

\* Rom. viii. 17.

nor be truly penitent; "Since it is the proper effect of penance to endeavour to destroy sin, and repair the injury it does to Almighty God\*."

Besides, as it is not the intention of God to forgive sin, but by obliging the sinner to a temporal punishment; so neither can it be, that he who does not design to undergo that pain can receive the remission of his sins, which is not given him but upon that condition. Moreover, by that resistance to the divine will, he commits a sin in his very confession, and by consequence renders himself incapable of absolution. This truth we shall see more clearly hereafter in Chap. VI.

## C H A P. V.

*Of the conditions satisfaction ought to have in regard of the confessor.*

**P**ENANCE depends upon two persons, the priest that imposes it, and the penitent who accepts and performs it. There are certain conditions which it ought to have on both sides. I shall speak briefly of the one and the other, that not only the penitent may know how he ought to perform it in order to reap advantage therefrom, but also what the confessor on his side is obliged to do, that the penitent may receive with greater submission the penance which shall be enjoined him.

The penance then, which is enjoined by the confessor, must have three conditions: it must be just, charitable, and prudent; that is, imposed with justice, with charity, and with prudence. With justice, in regard to the honour and interest of God; with charity, in respect of the salvation of the penitent; with prudence, in order to the forming of a right judgment of the quality of the penance, and foreseeing the effects which may follow.

*The penance enjoined must be just, charitable and prudent.*

These three conditions correspond to the three characters of a confessor in this sacrament, of a judge, of a father, of a physician: he ought there to behave himself as a just judge, as a charitable father, and as a wise physician.

First, it must be just, that is, proportioned to the sins, as well in respect of the enormity, as the number; for if the penance be too rigorous, it is an injustice to the penitent; if it be too light or easy,

\* S. Thomas 3. p. q. 85. a. 2.



easy, it is an injustice done to God. The first happens very seldom, but the second frequently, and renders directors extremely culpable in the sight of God, "by occasioning penitents "not to make the satisfaction which is due to him\*."

This proportion of the penance with the sin, is not to be understood of an exact and rigorous proportion; for that cannot possibly be observed by man, none but God knowing the punishment which each sin deserves. But it is to be understood of a moral and prudent proportion; so that a greater penance must be assigned to greater or more numerous sins; and a less, for less heinous and fewer sins: all this must be enjoined according to the ability of the penitent, which depends upon the strength of their bodies, the disposition of their minds, their age, their sex, their state, and the like.

In this the confessors ought to proceed with much circumspection, remembering that they are not absolute masters in the imposing of penances as they please, but that they act as ministers of *Jesus Christ*: and that it does not appertain to the servant to dispose at his pleasure of what belongs to his master.

For this reason the council of *Trent* speaking of satisfaction, gives this instruction to confessors, worthy to be observed, and which they ought always to have before their eyes. I shall cite it in this place, not only for the confessors, but also for the penitents sake, that they may know in this point the obligations their confessors are under, and may understand that they are not absolute masters of the penances they enjoin.

"The priests of our Lord ought, as far as the Holy Ghost and "prudence shall suggest unto them, to enjoin convenient and "wholesome penances, having regard to the quality of the sins, "and the ability of the penitents; for fear lest if they should "connive at their sins, and use them too indulgently, enjoining "some light works for most heinous crimes, they may become "partakers of others sins. They must have a particular care that the "penances they impose be not only a means to preserve the penitents in grace, and cure their infirmities, but also serve to punish their past offences†."

If penitents would but consider well this admonition, and the obligation their confessors are under of weighing well the penances they enjoin, they would not complain, as frequently they do,

\* St. Cyprian, lib. i. ep. 3.    † Conc. Trid. Sess. 14. c. 8.

do, that their penances are too severe; whereas they are far inferior to what they deserve.

Next to justice, charity is necessary in enjoining a penance; where the priest ought to be mindful that he is the spiritual father of his penitent, to restore him to the life of grace. Now this is to be understood of a true and real charity according to God, which ought to make him solicitous for the salvation of the penitent, using to that end mild or severe remedies, as he shall judge most proper and most convenient.

Thus charity avoids two extremes, the one of two severe confessors, who behave themselves in regard of their penitents, as some fathers do towards their children, whom they treat always with so much rigour, that they rather dishearten than amend them: the other is, of too easy and indulgent directors who either following their own complying nature, or negligently fulfilling that important charge, treat all their penitents with an equal, but indiscreet sweetness, enjoining but slight penances for mortal sins, how great or how numerous soever they be.

These two extremes are wrong, and have frequently very ill consequences. The former renders confession troublesome and tedious, and discourages penitents. The latter makes it unprofitable, or of little or no effect towards their amendment. This indiscreet mildness flatters them in their vices, without putting them to the trouble of correcting them, as we see by too frequent experience, and by the acknowledgment of penitents themselves, who frequently own that this excessive mildness has been very prejudicial to them by continuing them in their sins.

Those spiritual guides ought first to remember, that by this their mildness they become guilty of others sins. Secondly, "they prejudice their penitents in an high degree whilst they think to favour them. They hinder them from doing penance, and from satisfying God by their good works, and are the causes of their frequent relapses into sin\*." Moreover, they ought to consider that they do no less prejudice to the sacrament of penance, which through their indulgence is deprived of one of its chief effects, the amendment of sinners. Besides, their behaviour is highly prejudicial to other confessors, who administer that sacrament with greater fidelity. Penitents accustomed to this great indulgence cannot submit to confessors who are more exact in their duty, although these treat them with great prudence and much charity. Penitents complain

\* S. Cyprian, Epist. ix.

complain of them, fly from them, and seek out the most indulgent, and oftentimes the most negligent in the discharge of their duty.

There is a mean to be observed betwixt severity and mildness; they must temper the one with the other, as well in their admonitions as in the penances which they enjoin, according to the respective dispositions of the penitent. They must treat with more mildness one who is sincerely contrite, and with more rigour another who is void of this necessary disposition. They must encourage the timid, and soften the obstinate. Prudence is also necessary to enjoin a salutary penance. This governs and directs the two preceding conditions, justice and charity, and applies them in their proper place, and as they ought to be. Now this is not meer human prudence only, but a prudence inspired by God, and which we ought to beg of him. Wherefore the council of *Trent* said above: "As much as the holy spirit and prudence shall suggest to him." This prudence in the enjoining of penance consists in the observance of many things, but

*Three conditions* particularly three, that the penitent be able to *of a penance enjoined.* comply with the penance, that it be advantageous to him, and that it be secret for secret sins.

The confessor must foresee whether or not the penitent be able to perform the penance enjoined; he must enquire whether he can comply with it, and hear the reasons he may alledge. He must either shew him the means how to perform it, or give him another penance.

He must, as much as possible, enjoin such a penance as may be for the salvation and amendment of the penitent, so that, making satisfaction to divine justice, he may be confirmed in grace, and in the way of virtue. This is done by the imposition of such a satisfactory punishment, as also serves for a remedy against the spiritual distempers of the penitent: For example, of fasting against intemperance and luxury; of alms-deeds against covetousness and prodigality, and so of the rest.

In short, the penance must be secret, that is, such as may be performed in private, without being taken notice of by others; so that there be no rational fear, that by the penance the penitent may be judged to have committed some notorious sin, from whence scandal may arise to others, and infamy to the penitent.

This is to be understood, when the sin is secret, and the penitent is in good repute among those with whom he lives; for if

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his sins are public, or known to others, or if he be not accounted a very good and virtuous man, it is not only no harm, that the penance be known to others; but it is often very proper, and sometimes necessary, that he may edify those by his penance and conversion, whom he had scandalized by his wicked way of living.

C H A P. VI.

*Of the conditions of satisfaction in respect of the penitent.*

THE penitent contributes two things to sacramental satisfaction, the acceptance and the putting of it in execution; which is the reason why the conditions it requires of him are, that it be sincerely accepted, and duly performed.

First, the penance must be accepted, and before the acceptance it is no part of the sacrament; because, the sacrament is composed of three actions with regard to the penitent, contrition, confession, and satisfaction: Now satisfaction begins to be an action of the penitent by acceptance.

Secondly, it is not only necessary that the penance be accepted, that so it may be a part of the sacrament; but the penitent also is obliged to accept it, if he intend to receive the sacrament, for the non-acceptance of the penance would render the sacrament defective at least in the integrity of its parts; nay more, it would signify that he has no mind to satisfy divine justice; yet this mind or will is essential to the sacrament, and necessarily included in contrition, as is above declared.

Thirdly, the penitent is not only obliged to receive such a satisfaction as himself thinks fit, but such an one as the priest shall judge reasonable; because the priest is his judge, having power to oblige him to the punishment at the same time he remits his sins; and consequently the penitent ought to follow, and submit himself to the judgment of the priest, and, if he refuse, the priest may deny him absolution.

The catechism of the council of *Trent* declares this truth in terms very proper to be cited in this place, to convince penitents of this their obligation.

“Penance is a certain compensation or recompence for sins, (that is, a virtue or action, by which one gives to God in some sort the honour which he had taken from him) proceeding from the will of him who has offended, and appointed by the will of  
“ God



“ God against whom the sin was committed. Wherefore the will  
 “ of making reparation is also required in penance, as being the  
 “ chief part of contrition; and it is a necessity incumbent on the  
 “ penitent, to submit himself to the judgment of the priest, who  
 “ represents in that place the person of God, that he may enjoin a  
 “ punishment according to the greatness of the sin\*.”

By this authority penitents may see the obligation they have of submitting themselves to their confessors, and accepting of the penance they enjoin, in which also confessors ought to proceed with much discretion, regarding always what is most expedient for the salvation of the penitent.

That this acceptance of the penance may be well performed, it must be done with these three conditions, humbly, willingly, and sincerely.

*Acceptance of penance must be humble, voluntary, and sincere.* Accept it then humbly, *Theotime*, that is, with respect, submitting yourself to the judgment of your confessor, as your judge, your father, and your physician, and of him that holds the place of God. If you find any difficulty in what he shall ordain, declare it modestly, and follow his directions.

Accept it willingly, acknowledging that you deserve a greater punishment, and that this chastisement is far less than what you owe to divine justice.

Accept it sincerely, that is, with a good and steady resolution, fully to perform all he shall command you.

As to the performance of the penance, it ought to be exact, and faithfully complied with. There is an obligation to discharge one's self of this duty, 1. Because it is a part, and belongs to the perfection of the sacrament; 2. Because it is enjoined by an authority which has power to oblige, since God has declared that to be bound in heaven which the priest binds upon earth; 3. Because it is in virtue of that acceptance one receives absolution.

There is then an obligation of complying with that penance which one has accepted; and he who on set purpose, or by wilful negligence fails to perform it, commits a sin: and this more or less grievous, according as the omission is more or less considerable. If it be but a slight omission, it is but a venial sin; but if it be a considerable omission, as of the whole penance, or the greatest part of it, it may be a mortal sin: at least it would be

\* De Sac. Pen. n. 29.

be such, if the penance was enjoined in satisfaction for a mortal sin.

Perform then faithfully your penance, in obedience to God in the person of your confessor, and in compliance with your promise to the end that you may render the sacrament entire.

But remember to perform it willingly, devoutly, and secretly.

*Method of performing the penance enjoined.*

Willingly, to avoid the fault of those who never perform it but with regret and trouble, whereby they lose the greatest part of the merit they might otherwise obtain. It is strange, that men should

run into sin with so much earnestness and pleasure, yet should have such an aversion and horror against penance, which is a remedy against it. This is a complaint *Tertullian* makes of his time.

"We nauseate the remedy, though we longed for the poison."

Perform it also devoutly, but especially with the spirit of repentance, and an acknowledgment that it is an atonement you are making to God for the injury you have done him by your sins. Place them always before your eyes, deplore them as *David* did. *I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me* \*.

Lastly, perform your penance secretly, if it be great, and if it be given you for great sins, but which are altogether unknown to those with whom you live, that you may neither scandalize any one, nor defame yourself. This is a thing wherein penitents, and particularly young people are frequently faulty, declaring indiscreetly their penances to others, which cannot but be of very ill consequence, when their penances are long and considerable.

If the penance be enjoined you for sins that are known to others, as you ought not to affect to publish it, so neither ought you to avoid the making of it known, provided it contribute to the edification of others, and satisfy for the scandal which your sins have occasioned.

CHAP.

\* Psalm l. 4.

*Of the works which may be enjoined for penance.*

*Prayer, fasting,  
and alms enjoined  
for penance.*

THE most ordinary works of penance are prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, and whatsoever may have a relation to any of these three; such as in respect of prayer, are reading pious books, meditation, confession, hearing mass.

In respect of fasting, all the mortifications of the body, labour, retrenching lawful pleasures, and abstinence from things either hurtful or dangerous.

In regard of alms, all the assistance one can give to his neighbour.

These three sorts of works are very proper for penance. For first, by these three works we submit to God all the goods which we possess, whether of the mind, of the body, or of our fortune. The goods of the mind by prayer, which subjects the spirit to God; those of the body by fasting and other mortifications; and those of our fortune by alms-deeds.

Secondly, because almost all our sins consist in the abuse of some of these three things. Pride proceeds from the abuse of the goods or advantages of the mind; luxury from those of the body; and from the abuse of our riches proceeds covetousness: we repair that abuse by the three above-mentioned works. Prayer humbles the mind; fasting reclaims the body; and alms apply riches to a proper use.

These three works are highly commended in the scripture, as having a wonderful force to appease God's anger after sin, and to obtain of him all favours.

It is said of prayer, that *the prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased God* \*. That *the prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds* †. Piercing, as I may say, the heavens to mount to the divine throne, and make itself heard, and obtain what it desires. "Prayer ascends unto heaven, and mercy descends from thence upon man. To make prayer mount more easily up to heaven, it is good to give it two wings, viz. fasting and alms ‡."

As for fasting, it is said, that *prayer is good with fasting* §. That the fasting and penance of the Ninevites appeased God's wrath against

\* Judith ix. 16. † Eccli. xxxv. 21. ‡ St. Augustine. § Tob. xii. 8.

against them. When God exhorts his people to penance, he assigns fasting as one of the most efficacious means. *Be converted to me, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning.*

And as for alms, it is said, *Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness.* That with alms we must *redeem our sins.* That we must *put up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for us against all evil.*

There is a great number of other passages in the holy scripture which shew how powerful these three works are to obtain the mercy of God, and remission of sins.

These three works have each of them three singular qualities, which render them more amiable, and commend them to our more frequent practice. For they are satisfactory, meritorious, and impetratory.

They are satisfactory in respect of the temporal punishment of sins, by reason of the uneasiness they cause either in the body or mind. By this uneasiness willingly undergone, we satisfy for the punishments which are due to the sins for which we have not hitherto done sufficient penance.

They are meritorious in respect of grace and glory; which is common to all good works performed in the state of sanctifying grace.

They are impetratory, that is, they have a particular virtue to obtain of God the favours which we crave in doing them; and with how much the more humble and contrite spirit they are performed, so much more easily they obtain what they ask.

With all these excellent qualities, they have yet another no less desirable: it is this, they are sovereign antidotes against the humors of the soul, and serve not only as a remedy to cure sins, but also as a preservative against them for the future.

## C H A P. VIII.

*That the penitent who truly desires to secure his salvation, ought not to satisfy himself with the penance enjoined him in the sacrament, but he ought to perform others.*

It is a great and very common mistake among penitents to content themselves with performing the penance enjoined them, *Voluntary penances necessary.*

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\* Joel. ii. 22. † Tob. iv. 11. ‡ Dan. iv. 24. § Eccli. xxix. 15.



and to believe that they have done enough, when they have performed the penance such as it was, though frequently far less than what it ought to be. It is the cause of many evils, and particularly of the small progress made in virtue, of loose living, and relapses into sin; it being certain, that if we did penance as we ought, for our past offences, we should not so easily fall into other sins. Be persuaded then that you ought to do other penances besides those that are enjoined you in confession, and this for several reasons.

First, the better to satisfy divine justice for your past sins, on account of which much more must be suffered, which will be greatly diminished by such voluntary penances. Secondly, to make you more grateful and acceptable in the sight of God, and to merit at his hands those graces, which by your former crimes you have justly lost. Thirdly, to restrain you from offending God, and relapsing into those sins for which you now see yourself obliged to suffer. Fourthly, to cure the vicious and wicked inclinations of your soul, by exercising the acts of contrary virtues, in those voluntary sufferings.

The council of *Trent* says \*, “That the life of a Christian ought to be a perpetual penance; and that the just ought to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, by labour, by watchings, alms-deeds, prayers, fastings, and by chastity.” The maxims are drawn from the doctrine of *Jesus Christ* and *Apostles*; so that there is not the least ground for doubting the truth thereof.

Wherefore, dear *Theotime*, I exhort you to reflect seriously upon this truth, and convince yourself, that it is necessary for you to do penance in whatever state you are, if you intend to live as a Christian. It is a great error to believe that penance belongs only to religious, it is the duty of all Christians, and of all that hope to save their souls. But you will ask me how is this to be done? Behold the means, far easier than they are imagined to be.

Penance consists in two things, in a detestation of sin, and suffering in order to satisfy for the injury it has done to God. One of these is in the heart, the other in action; comply with the both, and you will perform a very profitable penance.

First, preserve always in your heart a true regret for having offended God. And in order to it, accustom yourself daily to re-

\* *Sess. 6, c. 13.*

it, and excite acts of sorrow in your morning and night prayers, by begging pardon of God for your sins, and detesting them from the bottom of your heart, purposing to do penance for them.

Secondly, suffer for your sins: 1. By imposing upon yourself some penitential work to perform every day: sometimes a recital of some prayers, at other times a distribution of alms; sometimes abstinence, or a retrenchment of some lawful pleasures, as diversifications, or the like. But all this must be done upon the motive of making satisfaction for injuries done to God, which is the spirit of penance. 2. Accepting willingly, and with the same spirit of penance and satisfaction, all the pains and evils which daily befall you, as the inconveniences of life, the disorders of body, the troubles of mind, disgusts, loss of goods, poverty, distress, afflictions either public or private; and generally all the evils which occur, and with which this life so much abounds. Join to these general evils those that are peculiar to your state, and bear them with the same penitential disposition.

All these afflictions and troubles may help us to do penance, and satisfy for our sins, upon condition we suffer them with patience (as the council of *Trent* has declared\*) and with sorrow for our offences. Whereas, on the contrary, when we undergo them without patience, and without offering them up to God for the remission of our sins, our sufferings are not only not mitigated, but also rendered unprofitable, without affording either any benefit for the future, or any comfort for the present. This ought to be well observed.

## CHAPTER IX.

*Of sacramental absolution. What it is; wherein it consists, and what are its effects.*

**A**LTHOUGH absolution be a part of the priests office, yet it is very fit the penitent should be instructed in it, that he may receive it with respect and suitable dispositions.

First, he must know, that, as in every sacrament there are two parts, whereof one is called the matter, the other the form; so absolution is the form of the sacrament of penance, without which the sacrament is invalid.

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\* Sess. 14. c. 8. & 9.

This absolution is a juridical sentence pronounced by the priest upon the penitent, by which, after he has taken cognizance of the sins which the penitent has confessed, and of his good disposition to receive the remission of them; and after he has enjoined him a proper penance, he remits his sins on the behalf of God, and by the authority which God has given him.

It consists but in these few words, which are *The words of* essential to it, *I absolve thee from thy sins*; all the others which the priest says before and after them are prayers which the holy church has instituted to implore the grace and mercy of God upon the penitent, and which may be omitted in case of necessity.

The effects of absolution are to remit sin, as far as concerns the fault or offence against God, and the eternal punishment, to blot out the stains which sin had caused in the soul, to recover the favour and friendship of God by means of sanctifying grace which it bestows upon the penitent, and to revive in him all preceding merits which were lost by sin.

It produces all these effects the moment it is pronounced. In that happy moment, the soul is translated from the state of sin to that of grace, and from the slavery of the Devil to the felicity of the children of God.

O blessed moment! *Theotime*, O happy change! If we knew how to conceive it aright, how should we bless God, who hath given such power to men\*! What high esteem should we have of this divine sacrament, which works such wonderful effects in us, and reinstates us in the way of salvation which we had forsaken through sin!

But as these admirable effects are produced only in such as are worthily prepared, it is necessary to treat of the dispositions, without which we cannot obtain the great and inestimable benefit of the remission of sin, but with them we are sure of receiving it.

## C H A P. X.

*Of the dispositions requisite for receiving absolution, and the cases in which it ought to be refused or deferred.*

**T**HERE is the greater necessity for your being well instructed concerning these dispositions, dear *Theotime*, because they are unknown to the greatest part of Christians, who think that

nothing

\* Matt. ix. 8.



nothing more is required than a succinct confession of their sins. They imagine, that having acknowledged their guilt, absolution is to follow of course, and that their confessor is to give it without restriction, after having assigned some light penance.

This error arises from their want of due instruction concerning the nature of this sacrament, which being instituted for man's reconciliation to God whom he has offended, not only requires that the sinner confess his crimes, but that he manifest a hearty regret and sincere resolution never more to offend him, into whose favour he seeks to return. Now the confessor, by whose ministry this reconciliation is made, must be satisfied that the penitent, who confesses his sins, be truly penitent for having offended God, and firmly resolved to fall no more into disgrace by a repetition of his sins.

This knowledge of the penitent's contrition, is an indispensable duty incumbent on the confessor, because contrition being an essential part of the sacrament, and without which sin can never be forgiven, it follows, that the confessor is under an obligation of knowing, as far as moral certainty in such a case can go, whether the penitent be grieved from his heart; to the attaining of this knowledge he ought to apply himself with the greatest care and exactness. Otherwise, besides being wanting in a principal point of his duty, he exposes himself to the evident danger of absolving an unworthy penitent, and committing a sacrilege instead of conferring a sacrament; to say nothing of leaving his penitent in a false security of being absolved from his sins, when he is very far from it: and even under a greater guilt than before, having asked and received absolution, without being duly disposed by a sincere regret for having offended God, and a serious resolution of amendment for the future.

He must then know and judge whether the penitent be sufficiently disposed to receive absolution. And since these dispositions consist of two things, in a sincere confession and in a true contrition for his sins, he must judge of them both, and if he knows any deficiency in either of them, or justly doubts, he ought to refuse absolution, or defer it till another time.

First, as to confession, he must judge whether it be entire and true, and made with requisite preparation. If he perceive that the penitent has not examined his conscience, he must oblige him to



take more time to call to mind his sins. If he judge that he does not declare all his sins, from a design of concealing any one, he ought discreetly to dismiss him, provided he has good grounds for forming that judgment: for example, if, he see that the penitent accuses himself with much difficulty and with that shame, that prevents his declaring all his sins: or if he know by some other way, that he has committed some sin, whereof he does not accuse himself, provided that he know it not by another's confession, which is a knowledge whereof he can make no use in regard of this second penitent; if therefore no other reason appear, he ought to give him absolution.

As to contrition, the confessor ought to understand whether the penitent have that which is sufficient; and if he judge that he has not, he cannot absolve him.

This judgment may be made two ways; with certainty, or with a doubt only, but that well grounded. In the first case he ought to deny absolution, or at least defer it, till the penitent be better disposed: in the second, he ought to defer it in proportion to the doubt. The confessor judges with certainty, that contrition is wanting in these three following cases.

First, when the penitent gives not the least exterior sign of it, but is deaf and insensible to all that the confessor tells him. In this case, says the catechism of the council of *Trent*, the confessor seeing that the penitent is not at all moved with compunction for his sins, must mildly dismiss him.

Secondly, when either the penitent does not seriously promise amendment, or when he does promise, but will not perform what is necessary to effect it, as avoiding the immediate occasions of sin, such as wicked company, bad books, games that cause him to swear, &c.

Thirdly, when he will not fulfil that to which he is obliged, as to restore ill-gotten goods, forgive his enemies, and be reconciled to them.

In these three cases the confessor ought to deny absolution, because the penitent is not in a state fit to receive it, as still retaining an affection to mortal sin, which is incompatible with sanctifying grace.

He must also deny it, when the penitent is guilty of any sin, reserved to a superior; because in this case he has not power to absolve him.

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There are other cases where he cannot so certainly judge of the want of true contrition, but where however he may reasonably doubt of it. And this frequently is the cause of much trouble to the confessor, who considers on the one side that he is obliged in conscience to deny absolution to him that is unworthy of it; and on the other side finds himself pressed by the penitent to give it, who judges always in his own favour, and believes himself better disposed than in reality he is.

This difficulty and doubt happen on several occasions, which it would be difficult and too long to point out here in particular. The most general one is, when the penitent after his confession relapses frequently into his mortal sins, as it happens to such as confess seldom, but more especially to those who have contracted any vicious habit, into which they frequently fall back without any amendment after confession. For although every time they confess, they testify a sorrowful sense for their sins, and promise to amend; yet, having already failed so often, we may reasonably doubt, whether this last resolution of amendment be real and sincere or not. But as this point is exceedingly difficult, we shall set apart the following chapter, for instructing the penitents in what manner confessors are to behave on such occasions, where their salvation is so highly concerned.

## C H A P. XI.

*In what manner a confessor ought to behave in regard to penitents in habitual sin.*

THIS question chiefly regards habitual sins that are mortal; for as venial sin does not destroy sanctifying grace, and may be remitted independently of the sacrament, it is not requisite to lay down any rules on that subject.

A habit of sin may be contracted in any kind of vice, but is most commonly found in sins of swearing, blasphemy, impurity, drunkenness, slander, and the like. The question is, how a confessor must behave in regard of a penitent, subject to frequent relapses into the same mortal sins, without any amendment after repeated confessions.

*Important enquiry: how the habitual sinner is to be treated.* There is but too much reason for such an enquiry, since the salvation both of the penitent and ghostly father lies at stake. The penitent's, because continually relapsing into the same crimes, there is great reason for concluding that he is not truly sorry when he comes to confession; it being scarce morally possible that a man should be so often truly sorry for what he never corrects in himself. Hence, it is much to be feared that many of his confessions are invalid, and that not being absolved from his sins, he is in a state of perdition, whilst he imagines himself to be in the way to heaven. The ghostly father's salvation too is at stake, since the duty of his charge requires of him not to profane a sacrament, by absolving a penitent, whom he has reason to think not worthily disposed. He is, moreover, indispensably obliged to promote the amendment of his penitent, in regard of whom he is a father and a physician, as well as a judge.

For answer to such an important question, we shall here set down how the confessor ought to behave with a penitent involved in habitual sin, to the end that the penitent, being well apprised of it, may willingly submit to the judgment of his confessor, and to what he shall appoint, in order to free himself from the dreadful state of habitual sin.

First then, if a penitent accuse himself of a sin, which he has frequently committed since his last confession, the confessor must examine whether it be a sin of habit, and how long the penitent has been subject to it. If he be his confessor in ordinary he may recollect; if not, he must enquire of the penitent. When he finds that it is a sin of habit, and that the penitent has frequently accused himself of it without amendment, he must examine into his behaviour during those relapses. If he discovers that the habit is not inveterate, that the penitent regrets his being engaged therein, that he has laboured to free himself, that he has often confessed it with due sorrow and full purpose of amendment: if the penitent has frequently overcome some temptations, though he may sometimes have yielded to others; if he has punctually complied with his confessor's directions; if he has carefully avoided the occasions of sin: then the confessor may judge favourably of him, absolving him of his relapses, provided he expresses great regret for what is past, a sincere design of amendment, and willingly accepts



cepts of the penance assigned for satisfying divine justice, as well as for his own amendment.

But if on the contrary, the confessor, in examining into his penitent's conduct, finds the habit to be strong and inveterate, the penitent little concerned at his condition, few or no pains taken to free himself, that when he has confessed the same sins before, it was not purely with a design of forsaking them, but only through custom upon an approaching great festival, or some other motive than that of his amendment and salvation, that he soon relapsed again after his confessions, with the same facility as before, that he has neglected to practise what was enjoined him for his penance and reformation, or performed it negligently, that he has taken no care to avoid the occasions of sin, and has seldom or never resisted the temptations to it: if the confessor, I say, finds the state of the penitent to be such, he ought to conclude that he is not worthily disposed for receiving absolution, that he ought not in conscience to grant it, and that if he should, he is wanting to his duty as a confessor, and the care he is obliged to take of his penitent's salvation.

He is wanting to his duty, because in quality of judge, he ought to examine whether the penitent be worthy of absolution, which he is not to give, unless he finds him rightly disposed by a sincere contrition for his sins.

*A confessor wanting to his duty as a judge.*

Whereas, in the case before us, he has all the reason in the world to think the contrary, and cannot take the penitent's word, when he declares he is sorry for his sins, he having said as much in his former confessions without any amendment. This is a sufficient reason for judging his contrition superficial, it being impossible, as we observed above, that the repentance of any evil can be always sincere, when it is wilfully repeated after expressing such sorrow. Hence, the confessor, in absolving his penitent on his bare word after so many relapses, exposes himself to an evident danger of giving absolution to one unworthy, and voluntarily joining with him in committing a fault.

He is likewise wanting to that charitable care he is obliged, as a father and a physician, to take of his penitent's salvation; because in giving him absolution in such a state, he leaves him in a false opinion of being absolved, when he really is not, and encourages him in a criminal neglect, in which he has long

*A confessor wanting to his duty, as a physician.*

continued



continued, of not labouring for his salvation by a serious amendment of life. Experience too plainly shews the little concern of such penitents in correcting their faults after confession is over. They presently forget their good resolutions, and relapse into the very sins they had so lately confessed: which would not happen, if their confessors employed the proper means of deterring them. The best and most assured means is to give time for trying the sincerity of their contrition by their resisting temptations, and forming frequent and interior acts of penance through regret for having offended God, and exercising exterior penitential acts, as prayer, fasting, and alms.

Such works of penance dispose penitents to a valid remission of their sins by a sacramental absolution, the delay of which makes them enter into themselves; they often discover that they never before thought of an amendment of life, or at least in a very superficial manner.

This reflection makes them apprehend the validity of their former confessions: they are convinced that there is a necessity of rectifying what is amiss, by a good confession, accompanied with the necessary conditions for an amendment of their lives. Such is the advantage arising from this conduct of prudent confessors to their penitents who submit to it. You will experience this, dear *Theotime*, if, having had the misfortune of being engaged in a habit of sin, the goodness of God should bless you with a confessor who follows this method. Such a one you will seek after, if you seriously think of saving your soul, and freeing yourself from the wretched tyranny of habitual mortal sins, which too often lead to impenitence and final perdition.

I know the generality of Christians exclaim against this conduct of prudent directors. The deferring of absolution sounds harsh and gives offence. They expect to be absolved the moment they have confessed, imagining themselves always well disposed, though perhaps oftentimes they have not so much as thought of the regret they should have for their sins, or of the obligation they are under of correcting their faults. They cry, the confessor ought to believe their asseveration, that they would not come to confession if they did not intend an amendment, that God has promised pardon to the sinner who returns to him, that *Jesus Christ* bid *St. Peter* pardon not only seven times, but seventy times seven, that is, always that they may die during such a delay of absolution, which consequently

quently would be the cause of their damnation. These are the pretences which a false prudence usually suggests to men's minds, in order to flatter them in their vices, and prevent their amendment.

But you, dear *Theotime*, must not act thus. Be convinced that there is a wide difference between the dictates of that prudence, which St. *Paul* calls carnal, and a truly Christian prudence, which is a gift of God, and is guided by charity. This directs penitents to the proper means for the flying from sin, and the slavery of a vicious habit, which leads to perdition: *that*, by making them apprehend and abhor all methods of withdrawing from sin, inclines them to seek out ways for obtaining salvation without an amendment of life. They imagine, that nothing more is required than to confess from time to time, and to be washed from their sins as fast as they commit them, making their whole lives one continued series of confessing and relapsing, at the end of which they flatter themselves with gaining heaven, as if they had taken true pains to deserve it.

This is an error and delusion very common in the Christian world, which detain men in vice, and lead to final impenitence. It is partly owing to the ignorance of penitents, and the little concern they have for the salvation of their souls. It may likewise be attributed to such confessors as are not sufficiently instructed in, nor convinced of the truths we have advanced above, nor of those strict obligations of their tremendous ministry, which forbid the transferring of a sacrament on the unworthy, and make them answerable for the salvation of their penitents. Such confessors readily dissolve them from their sins as often as they confess, after numberless relapses, and many confessions which they have made in vain without receiving the remission of their sins, and which the penitents themselves own to have been invalid, when they come to reflect on their deceitful resolutions of amendment.

These confessors ground their negligence or fatal condescension on the reasons objected above by their penitents. If those reasons be of no force, it will be manifest that both the one and the other are grossly deceived. This we shall show in the following chapter.

## C H A P. XII.

*An objection answered.**1st objection.*

**T**HE first reason alledged for absolving without any difficulty such as are in habit of mortal sin, as often as they come to confession, is drawn from this maxim, that the confessor is bound to believe his penitent when he says, that he is sorry for having offended God, and resolved to do so no more for the future. This obligation is supposed to be grounded on this, that as the penitent is his own accuser in confession, and the confessor is obliged to believe him to his sins, he ought also to credit him when he says, that he is sorry and designs to amend; there being the same reason for believing the one as the other. They also add that it is a received maxim among divines, that a penitent ought equally to be credited before and against himself.

*Answer.*

As this maxim is the great support of the opinion we here oppose, it will not be amiss to discuss it with accuracy, in order to show how ill it is applied.

First, if this doctrine be true, it will follow that the administering of the sacrament of penance is attended with far less difficulty than the wisest directors generally pretend. If the confessor be bound to believe his penitent on his bare word, that he is sorry for his sins, all he has to do is to assign a penance, and give him absolution, a thing so easily done, that the most ignorant confessors may perform it equally well as the best qualified for that office. To what purpose then so much prudence generally required in confessors? For though some discretion be necessary to know the nature of the penitent's crimes, to ask such questions as may be necessary, and no other, and appoint a suitable penance; it is certain, that the great difficulty is to discover the present state of the penitent's conscience, in order to know whether he be truly disposed for receiving absolution. Here so much prudence is requisite, that even the ablest directors are often perplexed how to proceed.

Secondly, it is surprising, that in so important an affair, as that of salvation, confessors and penitents should rely on a maxim

which would be set aside in any temporal concern. A man would be pointed at who relied on the word of another, who was notorious for a frequent breach of promise. No creditor will take a debtor's word after repeated promises of payment which have proved ineffectual. Every one suspects that man's sincerity who has been many times pardoned for that very fault for which he pretended to be sorry. And though he may be disposed otherwise to pardon him again, yet prudence, and even charity itself will suggest proper precautions to prevent being imposed on and injured afresh. Thus do men behave in the concerns of this life: and in confession, where salvation is depending, can it be required that the confessor should rely on the penitent's word which he has often broken? Less diffidence is shown in accepting a promise of not offending God again, than between man and man, where some trifle is at stake; and consequently the salvation of the penitent is hazarded on his bare word, when it might be secured by proper precautions, and applying the means of restoring him to the grace of God, and amending his past life.

*They who frequently break their word are no longer to be credited.*

Thirdly, that we may sift this matter to the bottom, I answer, that the general rule which directs the confessor to believe his penitent, when he says he is sorry for his sins, and is resolved to forsake them, if understood in a general sense without restriction, is false in itself, and highly pernicious to the salvation of souls. It is false, because contrition being an essential part of the sacrament, the confessor is absolutely obliged to examine whether that, which the penitent asserts in words, is so in effect. It is prejudicial to the salvation of souls, because it opens a wide gate to numberless bad confessions, as well in regard of the penitents, who are overjoyed to obtain absolution easily, as in regard of the confessors, who are inclined to follow a maxim which frees them from the trouble of examining into the state of their penitents, giving any uneasiness, or creating any dislike of themselves. And such bad confessions, besides the crime of sacrilege, keep souls in a perpetual impenitence, which leads to damnation.

*To give easy credit to habitual sinners is fatal to salvation.*

The proposition therefore is no longer true, than it is accompanied with proper circumstances. In which sense I assert, that a confessor ought to believe his penitent when he is morally certain that he has in his heart that contrition he utters from his lips: but this



this certainty cannot be attained without examining into several things.

*Method of examining habitual sinners.* First, whether the penitent in saying he is sorry for his sins, does not speak without reflection or meaning, and through a custom of saying so in confession, which is the case of too many penitents.

Secondly, whether the sorrow, the penitent expresses for his sins, does not proceed wholly from some worldly consideration, as shame, or some temporal inconvenience arising from his crimes. This happens but too often, through the ignorance of penitents, who never think of being grieved for their sins on a supernatural motive, as for the loss of God Almighty's friendship and their own eternal salvation, much less on account of the infinite injury done to their Creator. They frequent confession without thinking of either of these supernatural motives. This the confessor ought to examine into, when the penitent says he regrets his past sins.

Thirdly, when the penitent, either of his own accord, or prompted by his confessor, says he is sorry for his sins on either of these motives, the confessor must discover in what manner he utters this, to know if he be really so affected. Any penitent will readily answer, *yes*, when his confessor asks if he is sorry for having offended God; but this regret is much sooner uttered from the lips, than formed in the heart. Penitents frequently answer the question without reflecting on what they say. This likewise the confessor must examine into, and take due pains to instil into his penitent a supernatural sorrow and regret for his sins, founded on such motives as our faith has revealed.

Fourthly, though the penitent should say he is sorry for his sins on account of losing through them the friendship of God, or for the injury done to him, yet the confessor must examine whether he be fully resolved to correct his past failings. Penitents, subject to relapses, are apt enough to say they are sorry, but when asked if they are resolved to forsake their sins entirely, which true contrition necessarily implies, they hesitate and answer but faintly. They will say perhaps in general, that they will endeavour; but when particulars are insisted upon, when they are told such and such darling sins must be avoided, such and such means put in practice, certain occasions, which have been fatal, laid aside, they are at a stand, and nothing is to be got from them but faint and imperfect promises, which are certain marks of the little sor-

row they have for their sins; and which cannot be sincere, if a firm purpose of amendment is wanting. This the confessor must examine into, especially in the case of such as live in a habit of mortal sin.

It is not true therefore that the confessor must credit his penitent's bare word, when he says he is sorry for having offended God. He must thoroughly examine every thing, and be morally assured that his penitent regrets his sins on the motives above-mentioned, and that he has a sincere will to amend, and to perform whatever shall be appointed for that purpose. Thus we must understand that general maxim, *that the confessor ought to believe his penitent, as well when he says he is sorry for his sins, as when he accuses himself.* He ought to credit him in both cases, when he has no just reason for calling in question the truth of what he says; and as he must not believe the penitent, when, in accusing himself, it appears that something is concealed, either through shame or a want of examining his conscience, so he ought not to credit him as to contrition, when there are reasons, such as we have specified, to suspect it.

This so strict and indispensable obligation on the confessor's part, to examine into the interior state of the penitent as far as may morally be done, arises from his acting in quality of a judge by the appointment of the Son of God, and his having received a power of retaining as well as remitting sin. As judge, he ought not to pronounce sentence without knowing the merits of the penitent. Now, in order to it, he must examine him with the greatest circumspection possible, more especially in regard of habitual sinners, because he has reason to doubt of their disposition.

Again, he is obliged to this scrutiny by virtue of that power he has received for retaining sins: for it is evident this power does not barely extend itself only to refuse absolution to such as are manifestly unworthy, but also to refuse or delay it in regard of those whose disposition may be called in question; otherwise such power would be almost useless, if it extended no farther than to such as are notoriously incapable of receiving it. For in that case, it is not the confessor who retains the sins, but the penitent, by rendering himself unworthy of the remission of them.

From

From all which we must draw this conclusion, that penitents have no right to insist upon absolution, barely by saying they are sorry for their sins, and design an amendment of life; but rather that they are obliged to submit the judgment of their disposition to their confessor, and comply with what he shall appoint for obtaining more convincing proofs of it. Hence such confessors who follow that maxim, and absolve their penitents on no other assurance of their good disposition but their bare assertion, are wanting to their duty, and accountable to God for their negligence in examining into the disposition of their penitents, and hastiness in absolving the unworthy. Neither will that absolution avail, which is not ratified in heaven.

Did directors but remember the qualities in which they act, not only as judges, but also as physicians, and spiritual fathers of their penitents, their conduct would differ widely from what it generally is. Not only as judges, they would be careful not to absolve such as are unworthy; but, as physicians of the soul, they would prescribe the proper remedies for healing their habitual distempers, among which one of the most efficacious is the delay of absolution. This delay is frequently necessary, in as much as sinners are not duly disposed for receiving it. In the quality of fathers, their paternal love would temper mildness with severity for bringing such children to a right sense of their duty.

But if the great qualities of judge, father, and physician, with their heavy obligations, move not confessors, at least let them remember the dreadful menace God denounced against one of his prophets, and in him threatened with against all who are entrusted with the care of God's vengeance: souls. He says, that he will demand of them the souls of such sinners as they have not admonished of the divine vengeance due to their crimes. Hear his very words, which well deserve your greatest attention. *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: and thou shalt hear the word out of my mouth, and shalt tell it them from me. If, when I say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die: thou declare it not to him, nor speak to him, that he may be converted from his wicked way, and live: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand\**. These words plainly intimate, that God will take vengeance for the loss of a sinner, on him who contributes to it by a criminal silence and indulgence.

\* Ezech. iii. 17, 18.



If confessors, who are criminally indulgent to their penitents, would but often meditate on these terrible words addressed particularly to them, they would discharge themselves in a different manner of the indispensable obligation they are under of taking care in confession of their penitents salvation. They would not content themselves with slightly admonishing them to amend their lives, but they would employ all necessary means for promoting such an amendment, of which God has given them charge, and will exact a rigorous account at the day of judgment.

C H A P. XIII.

*Other objections answered.*

IT appears almost needless to make any reply to those, who alledge that the confessor ought to judge favourably of his penitent: that he must not too easily conclude he is imposed on: that he should believe his penitent designs an amendment of life, when he prevails on himself to confess his sins, which often is attended with great difficulty.

This objection is so very weak, that it scarce deserves any notice. It is but too true that penitents, through a gross ignorance, endeavour to impose on their confessors for obtaining absolution, by virtue of which they falsely imagine themselves to be justified from their sins. Even those who do

*2d objection.*

*Answer.*

*Habitual sinners often deceive themselves and their directors.*

not seek to deceive their confessors, frequently deceive themselves, in supposing themselves to be well disposed, when they are far from it; of this the confessor, not the penitent, is the proper judge. As to what is said, that the confessor ought to believe that the penitent purposes his amendment by coming to confession: this might be allowed, provided penitents never had other motives for coming to confession; but it is well known they often have, such as the command of the church for annual confession, some great festival, a custom of doing it at certain times, the rules of a confraternity, sometimes human respects, to gain the applause of men, or avoid their censures if they keep away the stated times. All these motives make it evident, that an amendment of life is not always the principal motive of going to confession,



confession, and experience teaches, that it is often done without any such thought.

There is another objection, more specious indeed, but equally false with the former. It is drawn from the scripture, where God promises pardon to those who return to him by repentance, and that sin shall not hurt the sinner from the moment of his conversion\*. From whence it is inferred, that since the sinner may be converted in an instant, he ought not to be refused absolution, when he says he is converted, and designs to correct his faults.

It is easily answered, that the inference would be true, provided the confessor was

*Habitual sinners  
not to be absolved  
till they give proof  
of a sincere conver-  
sion.*

morally assured of the sincerity of his penitent's conversion. But as there is great reason to doubt it in regard of habitual sinners, his duty obliges him to take all necessary precautions before he gives absolution. And the scripture is so far from condemning this practice, that it actually recommends it. See the marks of a sincere repentance and a true penitent set down by God Almighty, in the eighteenth chapter of the prophet *Ezekiel*. *If the wicked do penance for all his sins, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities, that he hath done.* And again: *When the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness, and doth judgment and justice: he shall save his soul alive†.* What can be meant by doing penance for all his sins, and departing from his iniquities unless looking upon them with horror and abomination? And can a penitent be said to act thus, who accuses himself of habitual sin as he has often done; without being moved, having little or no concern about an amendment of life? What is it to do judgment and justice, if it be not to judge and condemn himself as guilty in the sight of God whom he has offended, by submitting to all the punishment due to divine justice, and to the reparation of the injury done to him? Does a penitent act thus who thinks himself worthy of absolution, who insists upon it, and requires it from his confessor after so many repeated abuses? God has promised to pardon the sinner who returns to him, but he must return with a mind humbled by the horror of his crimes; he must seek him with a

\* *Ezech.* xxxiii. 12. † *Ezech.* xviii. 21, 22, 27.

his heart, and all the affliction of his soul\*. Where is the humble and contrite heart of him who accuses himself of repeated sins of habit? Where is his conversion of heart? How does it appear that he is changed, that he no longer seeks the pleasure he pursued before, that he now detests the things he was so fond of, and for which he abandoned his Creator and last end? I own that, if he be in this disposition which God requires, he deserves absolution, and that the confessor ought not to refuse him what God has granted. Notwithstanding I maintain that if he be really in this disposition, he will readily submit to whatever his confessor, who is not yet sufficiently assured of it, shall appoint for that end. The more contrite he is, the more he will think himself unworthy of absolution, and of his own accord will ask a longer time, that by penitential works, he may dispose himself for receiving so inestimable a favour.

There is another objection drawn from the 4th objection, scripture, but with as little foundation as the last: they say our blessed Redeemer ordered St. Peter to pardon injuries seventy times seven, that is, always†; from whence the true maxim among easy confessors of *toties quoties*, that is, as often as the penitent comes to confession.

If those, who alledge that passage, would *Answer*, take the trouble to read it; they would soon discover how much they wrest the sense of it; for it entirely regards injuries received from others, which we are to pardon as often as they are done. The text is clear: St. Peter inquires of our Saviour how often he ought to forgive his neighbour who injures him? If seven times? Our Lord answers, *I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times*‡: that is, as often as it happens. Consequently the passage no way regards the remission of sin in the sacrament of penance, where the confessor forgives the offence committed against God, not any personal injury against himself.

But if from this commandment of pardoning injuries, any one should infer that confessors may absolve without hesitation the crimes committed against God, he would reason very ill. For a man is master of what concerns himself, but a confessor is not so in regard

*Directors cannot without injustice absolve habitual sinners.*

\* Deut. iv. 29. † Mat. xviii. 22. ‡ Mat. xviii. 22.

of offences against God, to pardon them at pleasure, but is tied up to certain conditions, one of which is a sincere contrition in the penitent, and this the confessor must endeavour to discover. So that all that can be gathered from this text is, that as God sets no bounds to his mercy, but pardons all who offend him, as often as they return with a truly penitential spirit, the confessor ought to absolve his penitent as often as he confesses with the requisite dispositions: and this no one disputes. But the confessor ought to know that the penitent has such dispositions, and must employ the necessary means for that end; and consequently the passage alledged proves nothing. Nay, if it proves any thing in this case it proves too much, viz. that the confessor ought to absolve the penitent, though he shows no signs of regret for his sins, since we are obliged to pardon our neighbour even when he is not sorry for the injury done us: which consequence is utterly false.

There remains one difficulty to be answered which, at first sight, carries some weight with it.

*5th objection.* The delay of absolution, it is alledged, often disgusts penitents, and creates in them an aversion to the sacrament of penance, so that they seldom return at the time appointed which gives them an occasion of remaining so much the longer in their sins, and consequently does more harm than good. They add that confession being of itself attended with great difficulties, it is improper to encrease them by the delay of absolution.

I answer first, that if some penitents are disgusted by absolution being delayed on just motives, it is to be attributed to the novelty of these. These have always met with confessors who absolved them without hesitation, notwithstanding their repeated relapses. Thus confessors are in the fault, who ought rather to correct their too great indulgence, than justify it by an evil of which they themselves are the cause.

I answer secondly, that if this happens to some penitents, as no doubt but it does, first, most of such are neither rightly disposed nor instructed; there are many others who are satisfied as to the delay of absolution, when the necessity of it and the advantage it affords towards their salvation are properly explained to them. Did confessors discharge themselves well of their duty in this particular, by making

*True penitents readily acquiesce in delay of absolution if judged necessary.*



ing their penitents sensible of their reasons for deferring absolution, thou would find far less repugnance in them than they imagine. God giving a blessing to their good intentions will dispose the hearts of their penitents to agree to such a proper and salutary regulation.

Thirdly I answer, that in regard of those penitents who are displeased with such conduct in their confessors; it is arguing very ill, to say it ought not to be observed, because they are apt to take offence at it; for if it be, as it frequently is, absolutely necessary, it must be pursued notwithstanding their repugnance. The duty of a confessor indispensably requires, that absolution be refused to those who are unworthy: if the penitent is disgusted, the blame must lie at his own door, and not at the confessor's.

He ought to remonstrate that he cannot give him absolution where there is a want of disposition: that if he did, it would only serve to render the penitent more criminal in the sight of God: that so many confessions, without any amendment, may be justly suspected: that the penitent ought to think of repairing what is past, by a valid, and even a general confession of his whole life. He will often find that his penitent will yield to his remonstrances; or if they have not their desired effect immediately, time may bring it about. At least the confessor does his duty, and obeys the word of God, which commands him to reprove the iniquity of the sinner, and warn him of the vengeance hanging over his head. If the penitent makes a right use of this, the confessor will have the comfort of having contributed to it; if not, he has cleared himself from the just reproaches he might otherwise expect from his Creator. This is what God has declared by the Prophet *Ezekiel*\*; for after having said that the Prophet, who does not admonish the sinner to return to his duty, shall be accountable for his loss; he adds, that the Prophet who discharges his duty, though without effect, shall save his own soul; but the sinner shall perish for having slighted his admonitions.

As to what is alledged that the difficulties which attend confession ought not to be increased by a delay of absolution, which may be more insupportable to the penitent than confession itself: I answer, that this is true when such a delay is not necessary through evident danger of profaning

*Reasons for not absolving habitual sinners.*

*6th objection.*

*Answer.*



the sacrament, or for the penitent's amendment. In either of these cases, the delay of absolution must still be continued, notwithstanding any difficulties that may arise. It would be folly to assert, that a second remedy must not be prescribed because the sick person found a difficulty in taking the first: a physician who acts thus, exposes himself to the ridicule of mankind. A confessor

is obliged to mitigate such a remedy as much as possible, and employ it with discretion. But *Absolution must not be given to habitual sinners for fear of their displeasure.* to neglect it for fear of afflicting or disobliging his penitent, would be to act like a physician, who suffers his patient to die rather than prescribe a remedy he dislikes, though his recovery, perhaps his life depends upon it. Thus

it is so far from being true, that absolution ought not to be delayed by reason of the difficulty penitents find in confessing their sins, that, on the contrary, if they have such a difficulty, care must be taken that they do not lose their labour, which would be the case if, through a hasty absolution, they did not obtain pardon for their sins, or did not amend their lives.

I answer secondly, that if confession be attended with difficulty, it is only in regard of those who are ignorant of the great advantages accruing from it, such as the forgiveness of sins deserving

*Advantages accruing from confession.* eternal damnation, the being reconciled to God the peace of conscience, the great helps obtained for persevering in the grace of God both through the efficacy of the sacrament and the good advice given by the confessor.

Those who weigh well these advantages obtained by confession, are not concerned much about the trouble arising from an acknowledgment of their sins, but only how to prevent their confessions being fruitless or hurtful, as they will certainly be, if they receive absolution without being worthily disposed.

Another objection against the delaying of  
*7th objection.* absolution is, that oftentimes it is impracticable: for instance, in the confessions of sick persons, especially when in danger of death: where persons are under a necessity of communicating on the same or following day as children who go to their devotions at the same time with their parents: when the penitent lives in a house where general communions on certain festivals are observed, and such like occasions when they pretend confessors cannot defer absolution. I answer

again

again, that these particular cases prove nothing in regard of such as are not in those circumstances, consequently our maxim concerning the delay of absolution to those who are in a habit of sin, is still in force in all other cases. Every one sees how ill that person must reason, who concludes, that absolution must never be deferred, because an urgent necessity sometimes requires it to be given, as in the case of sickness or imminent danger of death.

*Answer.*

But to answer to the case proposed; a confessor may and ought to absolve a sick person, though in a habit of sin, *provided he shows sufficient sorrow*: because he is obliged to secure the salvation of the penitent; and at such a time he has no other means of doing it, than by absolving him on the testimony he then gives of his contrition.

*Absolution when not to be deferred in danger of death.*

He is at least then obliged, you will say, to credit the penitent, and why not at another time?

*8th objection.*

I answer that there is a wide difference between a sick penitent and one in health. The first can give no other proofs of his contrition than bare words, and therefore the confessor must believe him in those circumstances. But the latter is capable of giving more convincing proofs of his repentance by suitable actions. As he has frequently broken his promise of amendment, the confessor ought not to rely on what he says, without some signs of a real amendment, as we have shown before.

*Answer.*

*Dying sinners to be treated differently from those in health.*

Nevertheless, it must be allowed that the confession of a sick man, in the habit of mortal sin, is very perplexing on account of the difficulty of being morally assured that he is sincerely sorry for his sins. Discreet confessors use all the precaution possible not to mistake. Sensible as they are on one side of the danger the sick man is in, they employ all means that can contribute to move him to contrition and a sincere return to God, in order to give him absolution with as much safety as the case will allow. Considering also that he may possibly recover, they are careful in prescribing every thing necessary for an amendment of life, if God should please to restore his health.

As for the other instances, wherein the difficulty of delaying absolution is asserted: I an-

*9th objection.*

*Answer.* fwer, that the confessor must endeavour to suggest to them some prudent means of avoiding communion. If this be not feasible the first time they apply to him, he must exert himself in disposing them

*Habitual sinners* to a due regret for their sins, and must assign giving proofs of the proper methods of avoiding the like till amendment may be their next confession. If they make a right absolved, and not use of this advice, and show it by some amendment, the confessor may again absolve them, as otherwise.

we said in the foregoing chapter. But if they have made little or no progress towards an amendment of life, he ought to observe the maxim of not absolving penitents he has reason to think unworthy, and suggest to them how they may abstain from the holy communion without being pointed at.

*Important remark.* The best remedy for preventing these inconveniences is for parents to signify to their children, that they are at liberty to communicate when they think fit with their director's advice: and for superiors to content themselves with exhorting such as are committed to their care to frequent communion, but not obliging them to it any oftner than their confessors judge proper. The church herself has taken this prudent measure in assigning fifteen days for the *Easter* communion. Inspired as she is by the Holy Ghost, and knowing very well, that it may frequently happen that penitents will not be duly disposed in that space of time, she has left it to the discretion of confessors to defer the communion to a longer time. This she has declared when she says, "the faithful shall communicate at *Easter*; unless it be deferred the advice of the confessor on a reasonable motive\*." This restriction shows how little ground there is to alledge the obligation of pascal communion, for proving that absolution ought not to be deferred at least at that time; since the church allows of such delay, and thereby supposes the confessor may have just reason for it.

There remains but one difficulty to be solved, which is often started by penitents when their confessors are for deferring absolution: they alledge that they may die during that time, and that they are lost for ever. We may well

*Answer.* astonished at the ingenuity of mankind in

\* Conc. Lateran. iv. Can. 21.



ceiving themselves. They, whose life is a continued series of relapses into grievous crimes, are not afraid of dying for weeks, months, nay whole years, though in a state of sin and damnation, yet dread death during a few weeks employed in avoiding sin, and obtaining mercy by their sighs and penitential works! They are not afraid of dying whilst in the very act of offending God, when his vengeance is ready to fall upon them, yet they apprehend it when they are endeavouring to appease him! They insist upon absolution to secure their salvation, but will not dispose themselves by works of repentance for receiving absolution in such a manner as that they may depend upon it. An hasty absolution, extorted by importunity or circumvention, makes them easy in a false peace of conscience, without reflecting that absolution from man is of no force, unless ratified by heaven; and that unless they are worthily disposed, God condemns them at the same instant in which they are absolved by the priest.

*Possibility of death overtaking us no reason for not delaying absolution.*

Finally, in answer to this objection, I say, the church knew that men were mortal, when she deferred giving baptism to *Catechumens*, and absolution to penitents. The apprehension of their dying without baptism or absolution, did not hinder her from requiring time to be duly disposed for the reception of either of these sacraments. She had just grounds to hope, that, through the mercy of God, the *Catechumens* and penitents would not die without the sacrament, or that their penitential works, joined to an ardent desire of receiving it, would obtain for them the grace of perfect contrition, which would justify them in the sight of God, without an actual participation of the sacrament. This such penitents may hope for, who labour seriously to dispose themselves by a contrite heart and penitential works, for receiving absolution for their sins: and therefore the fear of dying ought not to prevent their submitting to their confessors when they judge it necessary to defer absolution; but rather such an apprehension should excite them to a punctual compliance with whatever is enjoined them for disposing them to receive it worthily, that thereby they may be re-instated in the grace of God, and the way to heaven.

To conclude all we have said for the advantage and even necessity of not giving absolution to penitents who live in habitual sin, but rather obliging them to employ some time in preparing themselves;



selves; I beg, *Theotime*, you would consider, whether penitents, who oppose such a discreet conduct, do it with a design of changing and amending their lives, or rather in order to go on in indulging their vicious habits? You will find their intent

*The contrition of habitual sinners seldom sincere:*

is not to correct their faults, but the better to indulge their evil inclinations. You may judge from yourself, if ever you were enslaved to a habit of sin, and you will own yourself to have very seldom seriously resolved, when at confession, to amend your life. Wherefore, if such be your case at present, I conjure you to enter into yourself in order to consider the imminent danger to which your salvation is exposed. Recollect how many bad confessions you may have made during such a habit, having often confessed without any true sorrow or design of amendment. How often have you imagined yourself absolved, when it has been far otherwise! And this through your own fault, having sought after easy confessors who made no difficulty, notwithstanding repeated relapses, to absolve you; and perhaps you have forsaken those whose conduct would have better secured to you the remission of your sins, and put you in the right path to heaven. If this be the case, dear *Theotime*, remain not any longer in such a wretched state: fly from the danger which surrounds you: repair your past bad confessions by one that is valid. Prepare for it by fulfilling all the necessary conditions, a sincere sorrow for your sins, a firm resolution of amendment, and a ready submission to what your director shall appoint.

#### C H A P. XIV.

##### *Of the choice of a confessor.*

**W**ERE penitents equally solicitous for the safety of their souls and obtaining eternal life, as they are when seized with sickness, for the recovery of their health and securing this mortal life, how unnecessary would any advice be upon the subject of a choice of a confessor.

But alas! when the body is concerned, no one is satisfied with the physician next at hand, much less with him whom he thinks ignorant or unskillful. None was ever heard to say, such a one passes for a physician, and ought to know his business; if he does not, he is to blame not I, and must answer for it hereafter.

Own

Own the truth, *Theotime*, do you behave thus when afflicted with a serious illness? Or if you hear any one arguing thus, would you not conclude him to be mad? This admits of no dispute.

No, no, *Theotime*, in the urgent necessity of a dangerous sickness, the illiterate, unskilful, or unexperienced physician is not sought for: neither would he be thought less than mad, who should prefer the judgment of the unlearned, when his malady required the most knowing artist.

Yet this is the preposterous method of the generality of penitents in choosing a confessor the physician of their souls, who is to free them from eternal perdition, and set them in the right way to heaven. They think the next at hand good enough for them. They say any confessor is sufficient; if he were otherwise, he would not be entrusted with that function.

*Few are equally anxious to have a skilful spiritual, as corporal physician.*

And thus it is with many, who seem fond of deluding themselves with such specious pretences, which they would certainly reject if the health of their bodies were concerned.

They very justly make nice distinctions betwixt physicians and physicians. All indeed may be physicians, but they are not all equally so. There are some sicknesses more dangerous than others, that require the most eminent physicians. Many frequently die in the hands of the unskilful. The same will hold good in the choice of a confessor.

But there are some who act still worse, and apply themselves to those whom they know to be the least able either to discern or correct their vitious humours, or to let them see the number, greatness, and enormity of their past sins, and to create in their souls an horror of them. They choose those who are least prudent in their prescriptions, and least capable of giving suitable admonitions, necessary advices, and other remedies against the maladies of the soul, the most indulgent in their penances, the most easy in resolution of cases of conscience, those in fine who dive least into their consciences, who pass slightly over all things, are least troublesome in questions, give little or no advice, and that which they give only in general without descending to particulars, who satisfy themselves with what is told them, and from a slight penance pass on to absolution, without examining whether the penitent be duly disposed. And these are the confessors not only most followed, but most anxiously sought after.

Now

Now is not this a deplorable blindness? Is *Blindness of penitents.* not this willingly to extinguish the light of reason, that they may more freely and without remorse of conscience fall into the pit of hell?

Are not Christians in a fatal situation to verify by their practices that grievous complaint which God once made against the *Jews*? *It is a people that provoketh to wrath, and lying children, children that will not hear the law of God. Who say to the seers: see not: and to them that behold: behold not for us those things that are right: speak unto us pleasant things, see errors for us\*.*

But what are the ill consequences of the remissness of such confessors to penitents? Their confessions become purely customary, not prompted by the spirit of penance; without shame and confusion due to their sins; without one serious thought of amendment. Thus they become buried in vice. Their whole lives are entirely made up of relapses, and they run on in the high road to eternal perdition.

And whence all this? but from negligent, ignorant, loose, or obsequious confessors; who resemble those *Prophets* of the *Jewish* people, to whom *Jeremy* attributes the cause of the desolation of *Jerusalem*: *Thy Prophets have seen false and foolish things for thee: and they have not laid open thy iniquity to excite thee to penance†.*

But if such confessors are guilty of the corruption and damnation of Christians; such penitents are no less in fault, who make choice of such confessors.

Therefore, O *Theotime*, be not so blind as to seek a director, who will suffer you without restraint to run headlong into the precipice. Aim by your confession to set yourself in the right way to heaven, and let the choice of your guide be such as may conduce to it by withdrawing you from vice, and conducting you to everlasting life. We have told you in the 1st Vol. of this work, what you are to do in the choice of a director, Part II. Chap. V.

## PART

\* *Isai.* xxx. 9, 10.† *Lam.* ii. 14.

PART. V.

*Of the preservation of grace after confession, against a relapse into sin.*

CHAP. I.

*Of the importance of this subject.*

**I**Treat here of the care penitents ought to take for continuing in the grace of God, after being reinstated in it by means of the sacrament of penance, because few consider it with the attention it justly deserves. The importance is sufficiently evinced, for that upon it the very fruit and end of the sacrament depends, which was not only instituted for the remission of sins, but for re-instating penitents in the way of salvation: now no one can continue in that way nor attain salvation, without preserving that grace by a faithful perseverance.

Is it not in reality an inexpressible benefit for a sinner to be restored to the grace of God, to be ranked anew in the number of the elect, and restored to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

But if this happy restoration be not preserved with care, but easily lost, though gained with trouble, what will it avail us? unless it be to render us more criminal in the sight of God, through the abuse of the sacrament, by depriving it of its chief effect; as *Tertullian* justly observes, when he says, "that the sacrament of penance is thrown away without a change of life, for then it is deprived of that advantage for which God instituted it, that is, the salvation of man \*."

Where is there a malefactor, who, having been once pardoned a capital crime out of the pure clemency of his prince, dares by a repetition of his offence the very first opportunity to provoke the justice of an injured bounty by a second fault, much less by repeating it as often as he is pardoned?

A person but lately escaped from a dangerous illness, is extremely cautious in preventing a relapse that would still be more fatal than the first. It is only in distempers of the soul that a relapse is not dreaded,

\* *Lib. de pœnit. c. 2.*



dreaded, though infinitely more pernicious and destructive than those of the body.

Christians dare to act with God, as they neither durst nor would act with their sovereign or even with their friend. For who is there that after a reconciliation is not afraid of repeating continually the same injuries against his friend after being pardoned, and does not endeavour to preserve his friendship when restored to it? But if it should happen so, every one would reasonably judge that man to be a cheat and an impostor, who should pretend to the name of friendship, and yet by a repetition of new offences continue to abuse the good nature of his friend, and by frequent relapses make his patience, the only subject of their mutual amity, and his facility in pardoning a reason for ridiculing him before all the world. Yet thus it is that sinners treat with God. They confess their sins, ask pardon, and time after time make their reconciliation with him by the sacrament of penance; and for some few days they curb their evil inclinations; but alas! they presently return to their former course, with less dread of losing the favour of their Creator and sovereign judge, than of displeasing the least of their friends.

Thus they pass all their life in confessing from time to time, and continually returning to mortal sin after confession; so that their whole life seems to be but one, as it were, continued series or succession of relapses into mortal sin after confession. As if this sacrament were instituted only for the remission of past sins, and not at all to give us strength to avoid them for the future.

*The aggravations inseparable from a relapse.* Is it possible, *Theotime*, that Christians, believing Christians, should be guilty of this disorder? That men endued with the light of faith should treat God after this unreasonable and unworthy manner? Is this to understand

the nature of the sacrament of penance? Is this to believe that it is a sacrament of reconciliation with God, not only for a time, but for ever? Is this to form a right judgment of his unlimited power, not to value his favour and friendship, but to forfeit it continually, and withdraw themselves by custom from that grace, to which by his pure mercy they have been admitted?

Did God only seldom and with much difficulty, receive us again into his favour after we had offended him, every one would stand upon his guard. One would be afraid of falling again into his dis-favour, and to hazard eternal salvation by repeated relapses.

But

But being we think that we shall be re-admitted into his favour when we please, and that there is no more to be done than to present ourselves to him in the sacrament of penance to receive the forgiveness of our sins, we presume to offend him on all occasions. We make his goodness a fresh motive for offending him, and for holding his friendship in such contempt, that we no sooner are reconciled to God, than we basely abandon him: an affront one would not offer to the most contemptible person living.

See then, *Theotime*, and consider well of what great consequence this subject is, and how it deserves to be solidly treated, and requires your most serious consideration, which I beg you will bestow on the following chapters.

## C H A P. II.

*How great an evil is the relapse into sin.*

**W**HAT I have already said does sufficiently evince, that a relapse into sin is an evil so great, that it ought to strike us with horror. Yet that you may be the more fully persuaded of it, hear how the Holy Ghost describes the enormity of a relapse into sin.

First, the wise man \* considering the greatness of this evil declares that he cannot behold it without a just indignation. He says, that there are two things, which when they happen grieve him very much; the one, to see a great warrior, after he has served a long time, reduced to poverty: the other, to see a wise man despised, instead of being esteemed according to his merit: but he adds, that the third he is not able to endure, and that it causes in him a transport of the highest wrath; that is, to see a man *that passeth over from the state of justice and sanctity to that of sin*, and who abandons virtue to follow vice. He further assures us that God will make that person one day feel the effects of his justice.

*The evil of a relapse expressed by the Holy Ghost.*

In another place he exclaims against those who forsake the path of virtue, and give themselves over to vice. *Wo to them that have forsaken the right ways. What will they do when the Lord shall begin to examine their ways, and all the actions of their lives†.*

The

\* Eccli. xxvi. 25, 26, 27. † Eccli. ii. 16.

The Apostle St. Peter\* inveighs with much zeal against those who return to sin after they have renounced it by the profession of Christianity, and declares *that their latter state is become unto them worse than the former*, from whence they were delivered by their conversion, which was a state of darkness and sin: That it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment, which was delivered to them. For, that of the true proverb hath happened to them, the dog is returned to his own vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire†.

The council of Trent cited above in Part IV. Chap. III. describes with much energy the enormity of their fault who relapse into sin after baptism, by pointing out four aggravating circumstances, which are found in their first relapse. The first is, that they sin after that they have been *once* delivered from the slavery of sin and the Devil. 2. That they sin after they have received the grace of the Holy Ghost. 3. That they sin with knowledge. 4. That in sinning they violate the Temple of God, and contristate the Holy Ghost. If the first relapse carries so much enormity with it, what must we think of frequent repetitions, perhaps throughout our whole life?

### C H A P. III.

*Of three great indignities which are found in the sins of relapse, ingratitude, perfidiousness, and contempt of God.*

**T**HE first is a prodigious ingratitude towards God in offending him over and over again, after innumerable benefits received from his hand, especially after having been delivered by God's pure mercy not only once or twice but many times from sin and eternal death.

*Ingratitude.* Reflect seriously upon this ingratitude, *Thou* time, and judge what it is for a slave to be ungrateful to his Lord, his Redeemer, to him

to whom he owes all he has, in short to God himself. If the council of Trent thus heightens the enormity of the first sin committed after baptism upon this account, that it offends God after we have been *once* delivered from the captivity of sin and the Devil. What must be said of those, who fall back into sin after they

\* 2 Pet. ii. 20. † 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22.



they have been delivered from it not once but many times by the sacrament of penance? Was there ever an ingratitude equal to this? *Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people* \*? O Christians, is it thus that you treat your God? Must you not have lost all sense and understanding, thus to forget the infinite favours of your Creator, and after you have been admitted into his grace and favour, to continue offending your maker?

Remember that God never admitted you to a reconciliation but upon condition of a for- *Perfidiousness.* rowful sense, which you protested you had for having offended him, and upon promise, which you made to be faithful to him, and not to offend him any more. Hence you are not only ungrateful in offending anew, after he had pardoned you; but also a perfidious wretch. Perfidious, because you acted contrary to your word, and contrary to the solemn promise made to God of serving him for the future. A promise which you solemnly made not to man, but to God himself before his church and in the presence of his Angels. You would blush for shame, if you should break your word to man, and yet you make a custom of doing so to God, to whom nothing is more displeasing than a promise slightly made, and ill complied with. *An unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth God* †.

Moreover, you are not only perfidious, but your perfidiousness is a certain treason which you commit against God; because you desert him to yield yourself to his enemy the Devil, and serve him anew against God himself. This made *Tertullian* say ‡, that the sinner, who, after he has renounced the Devil by repentance and returns again to sin, gives occasion to the enemy to rejoice upon his return, and triumph against God, saying, I have regained the prey which I had lost. Such conduct is manifestly to prefer the Devil before God himself, when it being in his choice whether he will be for the one or for the other, he so easily deserts the service of God, to deliver himself up to that of his enemy. By relapsing into sin, he who before had a design of appeasing God by his conversion, as if he repented himself of that good action, becomes willing to make a kind of atonement to the Devil by revoking his renouncement of him, and repenting that he had done penance for his sins: rendering himself by this fatal change as hateful in the sight of God, as he will be welcome to his enemy the Devil."

Vol. II.

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Weigh

\* *Duct.* xxxii. 6. † *Eccli.* v. 3. ‡ *Lib. de penit.*



Weigh well, *Theotime*, these reflections of *Contempt*. *Tertullian*. You will here discover the evil you commit against God, if you are so unhappy as to relapse into sin, which you had forsaken at your conversion. You will there find not only the ingratitude and perfidious treachery which one is guilty of in regard of God, when after penance he returns again to sin; but also the enormous contempt which one shews of his graces, and of God himself. For what greater affront can a person offer to God, than to esteem less his friendship than all those trifling things for the sake of which one so easily relapses into sin? Is not this to esteem and make greater account of those things, than of the grace of God? and to prefer the Devil who suggests them, before God who forbids them?

But that I may make you truly sensible of the greatness of the contempt; I ask whether there can be a greater affront offered to a person, than to neglect his friendship after being restored to it daily to offend him after being reconciled; to be almost constantly at variance, in hopes of being restored to his favour when one pleases? Would not every one say, that he who deals thus with his friend, must take him for a stupid and senseless man, who has not the least sense of being thus repeatedly slighted? Never was there an affront or contempt equal to this. Yet we thus treat Almighty God as often as we relapse into sin after confession; contempt which ought to make those who are guilty of it apprehend the just effects of God's vengeance.

#### C H A P IV.

*Those who relapse frequently into their sins expose their salvation to great danger.*

THE generality of Christians who live habituated to relapse into sin, are wont to say, that God is good and merciful, and to take occasion from this hope in his mercy never to amend their lives. Such a great mistake must here be cleared up, that you may see that nothing leads more directly to eternal damnation, than such a daring presumption on the mercy of God, in order to lead a wicked life.

First, it is in this that the height of the contempt offered to God consists, to take occasion from his goodness and mercy more heinously to offend him, and never to continue long in his favour since it seems so easy to regain it.

But in the next place, those who make use of this pretext, reason very ill, and deceive themselves: for though it be very true, that God is infinitely good, and his mercies have no bounds; where did they ever find, that God is good to those who despise him, and who presume so much on his goodness, as to slight his displeasure? Holy writ tells us, that God is good to those that are good; that he is good to those that hope in him, and seek after him; that he shews mercy to those who return to him. But it is not any where said, that he is good to those who contemn and slight him: on the contrary, he threatens them with dreadful punishments. *They that despise me, shall be despised* \*. It is said indeed, that God shews mercy to sinners who return to him by repentance; but it is no where said, that he has promised the grace of repentance to all sinners. We are assured, that God receives all those who being truly converted return to him; but where is it ever said, that he receives those who return to him only for a time, at some particular part of the year, and soon after return to their sins?

This is not found in any place of holy writ: But on the contrary, we there find dreadful menaces against those, who treat God with such perfidy, and so great contempt.

The *Israelites*, the chosen people of God, were *The Israelites* fallen into captivity and under the tyranny of *punished for their* the *Egyptians*, under which they had groaned *frequent relapses.* for a long time, overwhelmed with labour and

misery. God by a peculiar mercy withdraws them from it, working many great miracles in their favour, and among the rest, the death of the first-born of the *Egyptians*, the passage through the *Red Sea*, as upon dry land, so to free them from the persecution of their enemies, who pursued them with a powerful army. He conducted them all that way by a pillar of fire, which marched before them: he fed them with *Manna*, which he showered down from heaven every morning. This carnal and ungrateful people, in the midst of all these favours, revolt from God, repenting themselves that ever they had forsaken *Egypt* (where they had so long oppressed with so much misery) wishing every moment to return back thither, murmuring against God on every occasion, and distrusting his providence and almighty power. God is often incensed against them, and punishes them so severely, that many times his people taught by afflictions returned to the duty and obedience due to their God and their deliverer. But this

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their

\* 1 Kings ii. 30.

their repentance lasted not long; for upon the first opportunity they fell back to their wonted infidelity.

There was one, the height or chief of all the rest, which was the occasion of their utter ruin. When approaching to the land of promise they refused to enter there, giving more credit to the false reports raised by malecontents, than to the word of God, and the assurances he had so often given them of the delightfulness of the abode. This provoked God's wrath to that degree, that he swore that not any of all those, who had been incredulous to his word, should enter into the place of rest, he had prepared for them. *As I live: and the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. But yet all the men that have seen my majesty, and the signs that I have done in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now ten times, and have not obeyed my voice, shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any one of them that has detracted me behold it\*.*

This menace was not like the former, which he had denounced against that people: for it was accomplished to a tittle, and not one of them that murmured entered there. They all died in the desert, where they continued near forty years, and their children had to be brought into the land of promise, and were made happy to possess it in their place.

This terrible example, from which we learn how God deals with the *Israelites* after their repeated rebellions, teaches us likewise how he behaves to those *Christians*, who following the footsteps relapse into their sins, after being pardoned and received into favour. For what he did to the *Jews*, is a figure and a lively representation of what *Christians* may expect.

*I would not, says St. Paul, have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers, the Israelites, were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: and all in Moses were baptized in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual food: and all drank the same spiritual drink: (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ.) But all did not receive equal benefit from these blessings, for with the most of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the desert. Now these things happened literally to them, but were done in a figure of us, that we should not covet evil things, as they also coveted. Neither let us tempt Christ with perfidious infidelity, as some of them tempted. Now all these things happened to them in figure: and they are written for our admonition. Wherefore, concludes this divine Apostle, let him that*

\* Numb. xiv. 21, 22, 23.



*thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall*\*. Which is as much as to say, let every one take care to preserve himself in the grace of God, when once he has had the blessing to receive it.

All this is more than enough to demonstrate the truth we have advanced, of the extreme danger to which salvation is exposed by frequent relapses into mortal sin. But behold yet a more express text of the same Apostle St. Paul in his epistle to the *Hebrews*, who speaking to those who fall back into sin after they have been once reconciled to God, describes what they may expect, under the figure of an ungrateful soil, which, though carefully cultivated, however brings forth no fruit. *The earth, says he, that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briars, is rejected, and very near to a curse, whose end is to be burnt*†.

These words need no explication, *Theotime*, but only reflection; putting instead of the words *ungrateful soil*, those of a *soul ungrateful and perfidious to her God*, who by returning to her usual sins, continually abuses the graces she receives in the sacraments, without bringing forth any of the fruits of true repentance. You will find that this is what she ought to fear from the hand of God, and what you yourself, if you be such, ought to stand in dread of, *viz.* lest you be rejected by God, be cursed by him, and abandoned to eternal fire.

These three miseries, the greatest that can be apprehended make up an eternal damnation. They are the very same expressed in the sentence which God shall pronounce against the damned: *Depart, you cursed into everlasting fire*‡. See what we have said upon this subject in Part II. Chap. XI. and Art. III.

### C H A P. V.

*Habitual relapses into sin give just ground to suspect the validity of preceding confessions.*

IT is very difficult for those, who live in habitual relapses, to be truly penitent when they come to confession, without which they make their confessions null, and receive no resolution of their sins. First, generally speaking, they, whose

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relapsing

\* 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12. † Heb. vi. 7. 8. ‡ Matt. 24. 41.



relapsing is grown into a habit, only confess through custom on occasion of some great solemnity, or for some other reason of decency and apparent piety. They seldom or never do it with a true spirit of repentance, and a real desire of amendment and overcoming their vicious habits. Secondly, it is scarce possible that those who relapse ordinarily into the same sins after their confessions, should have true contrition when they make their confessions. For true contrition implies a sorrow for sins past, as well as a serious purpose of amendment. Now who can believe, that they detest those sins from the bottom of their hearts, which they resume again so easily and so soon? How can it be thought that they have a firm resolution of doing what they scarce ever set about in good earnest? How can it be, that in all their confessions they should have a firm resolution of renouncing the sin, which yet they have never forsaken? Never leaving it at all, can it be believed that they have always a sincere resolution of forsaking it? This is what cannot be conceived, and which never happens in temporal concerns; where a firm resolution is in a manner always followed by performance.

III. Affuredly there is not any more infallible sign of false repentance. "For if you are penitent, you ought to repent yourself of your sin; if you be sorry for it, do not commit it; if yet you commit it, you are not penitent at all\*." "He who is ashamed of the evil he has done, will take great care to avoid what may make him blush anew†." Some are wont to answer, that this relapse into sin does not proceed from any want of resolution and repentance, but from human frailty, which inclines to evil. This excuse is as false and ill grounded, as it is common among those who flatter themselves in their sins which they are not willing to forsake.

For first, can it be said, that this is an effect of frailty, when one wilfully returns to sin, knowing full well

*Habitual relapses must be ascribed to malice and not to frailty.* the evil he does, and when he is furnished with all the means necessary to preserve himself from it? Is not this what we call the sin of malice, and not of frailty? as we have shewn above in Part III. Chap. XIV. And yet this is

the case of the greatest part of those who make a custom of relapsing into their sins after confession.

Secondly, can it be called an effect of frailty, when one returns

\* St. Augustine. † St. Ambrose.

to sin because he will not take due measures for the overcoming of his habits, by carefully avoiding the occasions of sin, taking proper advice and using every necessary means to that effect. Is not this deceiving one's self, to attribute his frequent relapses to human frailty, when they are entirely owing to one's own will, and to the neglect of those things which would preserve us from sin?

Thirdly, if this frailty were not assisted by divine grace, the excuse might perhaps be admitted: but being strongly fortified by the helps which God bestows upon us in our necessities, we cannot lay the fault of our relapses into sin upon our own frailty, without accusing ourselves, either of not begging the grace of God in our prayers, or of not being faithful in co-operating with his grace.

Wherefore, to speak the truth, we ought not here to accuse human frailty, but the weakness of our repentance and contrition, the faint regret or sorrow for sins past, and the weak and very imperfect resolution we have of avoiding them for the time to come. I do not say, that a relapse into sin is always the effect of a false repentance; for it may and does happen, that we relapse into sins for which we were truly penitent. But I speak of a frequent and habitual relapse; and I affirm, that morally speaking it is impossible that those who live in this manner should not very frequently make invalid confessions for want of contrition; and that they often believe themselves to be, when they are not, truly penitent, for the reasons above-mentioned; which evinces the truth of that excellent saying of St. Clement of Alexandria: "Frequently to crave pardon for faults which one frequently commits, is not to be a penitent, but only to have a shadow and appearance of repentance\*." Ponder well upon these words.

## C H A P. VI.

*An excellent admonition of St. Gregory concerning the false repentance of habitual sinners.*

I CANNOT here omit that important admonition of St. Gregory the Great, confirming all we have advanced in regard of those who frequent the sacrament of penance, without correcting their vicious habits. It is in his *Pastoral*†, where he says, that they ought to take heed lest their repentance be very often false, and

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only

\* Lib. 2. Stromatum. † P. 3. C. 31.

only in outward shew. " Those sinners who bewail their past  
 " crimes, yet never forsake them, must be made to reflect that  
 " as too many such like entertain indeed thoughts of repentance,  
 " but never go farther, so on the contrary the virtuous are indeed  
 " tempted to sin, but without yielding to the temptation. Now as  
 " the temptations, to which the just do not at all consent, serve  
 " only to confirm them the more in virtue; so these imperfect  
 " inclinations to virtue serve to detain sinners in their evil ways,  
 " and to give them a presumptuous confidence of their salvation  
 " in the midst of their sins, which they commit without remorse:  
 " this very presumption is a punishment of their reiterated and  
 " repeated sins. Consider the two opposite examples of *Balaam*  
 " and *St. Paul*. *Balaam* seeing, from the top of a mountain, the  
 " people of God encamped in the desert, conceived some pious  
 " and strong desires of his conversion, languishing away in wishes  
 " to die the death of the just, and to resemble that holy people  
 " in his death. But immediately after he gave pernicious counsel  
 " to destroy those very people whom he had so much wished to  
 " resemble in his death. *St. Paul*, on the contrary, feels within  
 " himself solicitations to sin, and those temptations confirm him  
 " more in virtue.

" Whence comes this? *Balaam* is touched with motions of re-  
 " pentance, and is not justified: *St. Paul* is incited to sin, and  
 " the temptation does not defile his soul: but to convince us  
 " that good works begun and not perfected, do not at all conduce  
 " to the salvation of the wicked, no more than the first motions  
 " to evil, render good and virtuous souls guilty in the sight of  
 " God."

This observation deserves to be well considered, the more be-  
 cause it points out a very particular reason of that false repentance  
 which is customary with those who do not amend their lives  
 which is, that they have only a beginning of repentance conceived  
 upon some good motions they feel in their heart, without proceed-  
 ing farther. They conceive indeed some displeasure against their  
 sins, but not a perfect hatred and detestation of them; they feel  
 some faint desires, but they have not an entire and sincere resolu-  
 tion of forsaking them.

*Important obser-  
 vation.*

There is yet one thing more very remarkable  
 in this admonition drawn from the example  
 of *Balaam* and his false repentance. This  
 wicked prophet, in the thoughts he had of  
 repentance



repentance, desired indeed to die the death of the just, but he says not one word of living as they did: he begs the grace of resembling them in his death, but not of imitating them in his life. *Let my soul, says he, die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them* \*. Thus his repentance was false, because he did not desire to forsake his sins, and amend his life; but only to be saved at the hour of death: Which is in other words to desire to live ill, and yet not be punished for it. This kind of repentance is found but too often among Christians, particularly among those who live in this customary relapse of which we are speaking. For there is not one of them who desires not to die in the grace of God, and save their souls: And for this reason they go to confession now and then to discharge themselves of their past sins, that they may not be troubled with remorse of conscience at the hour of death; but they seldom or never desire to live holily, or at least they have not a firm and efficacious will to do it, as by their frequent relapses too evidently appear.

C H A P. VII.

*By habitual relapses we lose great part of the benefit of our preceding good confessions.*

**H**abitual relapses into sin do not only render many confessions invalid and null, but also make us lose the advantage of those good confessions we have made.

Two benefits result from the sacrament of penance. The first is, the remission of sins; the second, the recovery of the friendship of Almighty God, and many other graces and helps, which he grants by virtue of the sacrament to those who worthily repent. Though these two effects be produced at the same time, and inseparably the one from the other; yet one may be lost without the other. For by relapse into mortal sin one does not lose the remission which he had received of former sins by good confessions; it being a certain truth, that a sin once pardoned never revives again: as the Apostle assures, *The gifts of God are without repentance* †. But as to the friendship of God, and the special assistances of his grace, which one merits by means of the sacrament, it is certain they are entirely lost by a relapse into mortal sin.

*The friendship of God, though not the remission of sin is lost by a relapse.*

God

\* Numb. xxiii. 10. † Rom. xi. 29.



God himself threatens this by his Prophet. *If the just man, says he, shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity: his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered\**. The wise man says upon this subject, *He that washeth himself after touching the dead, if he toucheth him again, what doth his washing avail † ?*

For this reason God says to sinners, *Wash yourselves, be clean ‡*: he does not only order that they wash themselves from their iniquities, but that they be also cleansed; forasmuch as according to the observation of St. Gregory, “ It is to no purpose to be washed, if “ one do not preserve himself clean. Without this one does no “ more than those unclean animals, which wash themselves, and “ presently wallow again in the mire. Hence, those (says St. Gregory “ above-cited) who do penance, and do not amend their lives, are “ to be put in mind, that it is to no purpose to cleanse themselves “ from their sins by tears, if afterwards by their evil actions they “ defile their souls: they seem only to cleanse themselves, to the “ end that after they are washed they may return to their former filth.”

## C H A P. VIII.

*The last state of a relapsing sinner is worse than the first.*

**T**HIS truth our Saviour himself has taught us upon occasion of a possessed person, whom he had delivered from that miserable condition. It happens, that the wicked spirit being cast out of a man, uses all his endeavours to return to his former dwelling, and calling others to his assistance, at last he re-enters there, and this second-possession is much more prejudicial than the former. *And the last state of that man is made worse than the first§*. By this example of a person whose body is possessed, we are instructed in what passes in the soul, when one unfortunately relapses into sin; as the Apostle St. Peter has explained it in these words: *If, flying from the pollutions of the world, they be again intangled in them, and overcome; their latter state is become unto them worse than the former ¶*.

Now if this be true of the first relapse, what will it be of the second, of the tenth, of the twentieth, and of all those which befall them, who do nothing else all their life-time but repent, and then

\* Ezech. iii. 20. † Eccli. xxxiv. 30. ‡ Isai. i. 16. § Mat. xii. 45.  
¶ 2 Pet. ii. 20.

then as often return to the sins they had repented of? It is evident, that they fall at last into a most deplorable state, even almost into an impossibility of saving their souls. 1. Ill

habits encrease, and grow stronger and stronger.

*Three effects of a relapse expose salvation to the utmost danger.*

2. The light and graces of God diminish very considerably. 3. The Devil comes with more

strength and power to destroy him, whom he sees so deeply engaged in wickedness. Behold

three things, which endanger salvation in an high degree.

For first, as to vicious habits, it cannot be doubted, but that they are so fortified by a frequent repetition of their proper acts, that they become at length insurmountable. The reason is clear, and experience daily verifies it. See Vol. I. Part I. Chap. X.

As to the graces of God, there is not any thing more apt to diminish them than habitual relapses, accompanied with ingratitude, perfidious infidelity and contempt. But what most of all impairs them is the abuse of the sacraments, which one is guilty of during these frequent relapses. For either the confessions which they make, and the communions they frequent are good or bad: if bad, then they are so many sacrileges, which provoke God's wrath against us. If good, the sinner by his relapse loses all the advantage, and draws upon himself a diminution of God's graces, by the abuse of those which he received in the sacraments. This our Blessed Saviour has declared, when he says, *He that bath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound: but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath* \*. That is, he encreases his grace in those who make a good use of it, but withdraws it from such as abuse it; of which none are more guilty, than those who fall back into those very sins from which they have been absolved.

Now if divine graces be lost and diminished by these repeated relapses, the third effect, which is the new addition of the power of our ghostly enemy, must follow of necessity. For as God is no sooner departed from the soul, than the Devil presently takes possession of it; so also, according to the measure of his removal, the Devil becomes more powerful to effect our ruin. This is a necessary and infallible consequence; and this is the reason why God pronounced this dreadful sentence: *Wo to them, when I shall depart from them* †. And the greatest of these misfortunes is, that the Devil becomes master of the soul, and reduces her to such a

slavery,

\* Mat. xiii. 12.

† Osee ix. 12.

slavery, as to oblige her to do his will, as St. Paul has it, *by whom they are held captive at his will.* \*

## C H A P. IX.

*Frequent relapses into sin lead to final impenitence.*

**I**F an habitual relapse into sin, be the cause of many sacrilegious confessions, and make us lose all the fruit of those we had made well; and if in the way of salvation it make a man always fall from bad to worse: it evidently follows, that it generally leads to impenitence.

*Reasons why a relapse leads to impenitence.* First, those who live in these customary relapses intermingled with confessions, believe themselves to be in a good way, whereas in reality they are far from it. They rely much upon the confessions they make from time to time, and never consider how criminal their relapses make them in the sight of God. "Hence beginning some good works, which they never perfect; they live in a proud presumption, that they shall be saved in the midst of the evils which they commit as far as they are able†." Thus not at all mistrusting their wicked state, they die without repentance of their sins.

Secondly, being often subject to make sacrilegious confessions from a want of true sorrow, they are in great danger lest the last they make be like the former, when they should imagine themselves to have true contrition, which is only such in appearance as it was in their precedent confessions. This may easily happen, especially if at that last time they confess their sins to their ordinary director, who has indulged them in their repeated relapses, and cherished them in their continued impenitence.

Thirdly, those who make a custom of relapsing and of frequenting the sacraments, at length become insensible to all things which might move them, and hardened against all the motives which can be offered to them, of fear, of hope, of the love of God. They are accustomed to hear all these things in their confessions, and at other times, whence they are deaf to all such motives when proposed to them on the most urgent occasions: because whatever is familiar to us, makes no impression. Thus in time of sickness they are exposed to the danger of making as sacrilegious

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\* 2 Tim. ii. 26. † St. Greg. de cura Pastor. c. 31.



confessions as they did when in health; which is the more likely to happen as they generally put off every concern of this nature to the very last, when their distressful situation will not allow them to perform well so difficult a work. The repentance of dying persons, as *St. Ambrose* remarks, is often infirm and languishing.

Fourthly, those who live in this manner have great grounds to fear, that God will forsake them at that last hour, in punishment of their repeated infidelities, of the abuse of his sacraments, and divine graces which they have therein received in vain; and also in chastisement of a secret presumption which they have entertained of being able to forsake their sins whenever they should please. A presumption however common, yet highly offensive in the sight of God; the more so, as being the cause of all their relapses after confession: Because they believe they shall always rise again, as hitherto they have done; but they find themselves frequently deceived. God by a just judgment punishes them at the hour of their death, by leaving them then to themselves in their greatest need, who before had continually abused his graces, and yet were so rash and confident as to think themselves secure, and from thence took occasion to remain in their sins.

The history of *Sampson* is very instructive on this subject. God had endowed him with an extraordinary and miraculous strength of body; he employed it many times against the *Philistines* his enemies, whom he had often overthrown or put to flight; and particularly upon some occasions, wherein his wife, who was of that nation, confident of having discovered the secret of his strength, had attempted to betray him into their hands. He had discomfited them with much ease; and presuming upon future success, he told her that the secret of his strength lay in his hair, not believing perhaps that what he said was true. She called in his enemies, and after she had cut off his hair, whilst he was asleep, she delivered him into their hands. He awakes with the noise, and the scripture remarks, that awakening he said, *I will go out as I did before, and shake myself*: but he was deceived in his hopes; not knowing that the Lord was departed from him. In consequence whereof, he falls into the hands of his enemies, who pull out his eyes and send him into their country, where he becomes their pastime and the object of their scorn.

Behold a figure and lively representation of what befalls Christian souls, who abuse the graces of God, and return to their sins, upon presumption



presumption of a future repentance; for God many times gives them over to an obdurate heart, and to final impenitence, either by refusing them time to repent, or by depriving them of the means and grace to perform it well. "Although he has promised pardon to penitent sinners, he has promised repentance to no man\*."

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### C H A P. X.

*What directors should do to prevent the habitual relapses of their penitents.*

**A**S in corporal sickness relapses may spring from the physician's fault, either because he has not sufficient skill to know the remedies proper for such and such distempers, or prudence enough to apply them in due season, or sufficient resolution, to make them

*Knowledge, prudence, and resolution necessary in a director.*

be put in execution by the patient, notwithstanding his resistance, or impatience: so when penitents easily relapse into their sins, one may often say with truth, that it proceeds from the confessor's fault, who is deficient in one of these three things, either not having sufficient knowledge of the nature of the disorder, the remedies it requires, or wanting prudence to apply them right, or at least (which is commonly the case) resolution to oblige penitents there-to when they appear, as but too often they do, unwilling: this resolution is an effect of the charity they ought to have towards their penitents, whose salvation they should rather seek after, than yield to their inclinations although contrary to their good. Were confessors sufficiently endowed with these three qualifications, and used them with discretion, as they are obliged to do, they would prevent a vast number of relapses, and put their penitents into the way of a truly Christian life.

For first, their skill giving them a perfect insight into the obligation which Christians are under of living in the grace of God, and of the danger to which by these relapses their salvation is exposed, they would make a more strict inquiry into the most proper means to cure their penitents of their vices.

Secondly, their prudence would make them solicitous to know the present state of the penitent; in which they ought to observe

two

\* St. Augustine.

two things. 1. Whether he be duly disposed to receive absolution; and, secondly, Whether there be any hopes of his amendment. Thirdly, by their resolution they should oblige the penitent to perform what they shall judge necessary for receiving the sacrament worthily, and reaping some spiritual advantage.

The confessor then, as a good spiritual physician, ought to be possessed of these three qualifications, and to employ them for the good of his penitent, and the better discharge of his own duty. This good of the penitent consists in two things. First, in being restored to health, that is, to the grace of God: Secondly, in not relapsing into his former sickness, which is mortal sin. "For there are two parts in physic, the one to cure the disease, the other to preserve the health\*."

The confessor is obliged to procure both these advantages for the penitent, and to employ for that end knowledge, prudence, and a charitable steadiness. He must not content himself with having restored his penitent

*To secure the sacrament, and restore the penitent to the grace of God the first duty of a director.*

to health, but he must labour also to preserve it, if he design to comply with the duty of a worthy minister of *Jesus Christ*, and a faithful co-operator with the grace of God, "who does not satisfy himself with remitting our

sins by justification, but moreover grants such a supply of his grace as is necessary to preserve us in that happy state†." To procure him the first advantage, the director must examine strictly whether the penitent be capable of absolution, and to this end it is necessary to examine into two different things. The one, whether he have any of the impediments above-mentioned in Part IV. Chap. X. and the other, whether he has a custom of relapsing into his mortal sins after confession. For in this case there is little reason to believe the penitent, when he says that he is truly sorry for having offended God, and promises to amend. He often indeed makes such protestations, which do not come from his heart, or at least without any serious thoughts of amendment. He believes he has contrition, but has it not. This happens but too frequently, and then the confessor cannot give absolution, without putting himself in danger of committing a sacrilege. He ought to defer it, and give time to his penitent, to think as he ought of his amendment, and dispose himself for absolution.

Such

\* St. Augustin. in ps. viii. † St. Aug. ib.

Such proceedings surprise penitents, when they find confessors treat them as they are obliged to do, but these are penitents in name only, and not in reality, who believe that confession consists only in a declaration of their sins, and that when once they have declared them, they have a right to receive absolution, and to oblige the confessor to it. They expect to be believed upon their bare word, when they say they are truly sorry for their sins, and that they will not commit them any more for the future; although in their former confessions they have always said the same, and without effect.

We have shown above how much such penitents deceive themselves: For they will judge their judges, and teach their physicians. It belongs to the confessor to judge of the state of the penitent, and see whether he be sufficiently disposed to receive absolution, and whether or no he can give it with safety. This is his duty, as being obliged to give an account of his conduct to God. It is the blood of the Son of God, which he applies in the sacrament; and God will require an exact and rigorous account of him, if he prostitute it to the unworthy. Judge then *Theotime*, whether that penitent be not very unreasonable, who would oblige his confessor to give him absolution, when the confessor either does not find him duly disposed, or has good grounds for suspicion. Is not this to seek his own and his confessor's damnation?

*To absolve those whose sincerity is justly suspected a damnable practice.* If the penitent be here blameable, the confessor is much more to be condemned for so easily yielding to the importunities of his penitent, as to give him a doubtful absolution, which may be rather hurtful than profitable to him. He ought to remember, that there are

cruel mercies, hurtful both to those to whom they are shewn, and to those who shew them; and that a good physician does not desist from applying remedies, when he judges them necessary, notwithstanding the opposition his patient makes. He lets him complain, being assured that what he does is necessary for the patient, who when he shall have recovered his health, will not only be well contented to have suffered, but also acknowledge the kindness his physician did him. "He is not always a friend, who spares us, nor always an enemy, who chastises. The physician, who commands a lunatic to be bound, and awakes a person in a lethargy, is troublesome to them both, but it is because he loves them, and by tormenting them he cures them. The one and the other, as long as they are sick, are angry with him; but as soon as they are cured, they love him." "The



"they are cured, they hold themselves much obliged to him, for not sparing them \*."

Every director should endeavour to blend his steadiness with mildness, inducing the penitent to approve of his conduct, by testifying a great regard for him, and convincing him that he is bound to take these measures, as well for the discharge of his duty as for the salvation of his penitent. This is the oil of the gospel †, which he must employ with the wine, when he dresses the wounds of others consciences, endeavouring by charity to sweeten the sharpest remedies he is obliged to use. Behold here the first good which the confessor ought to have in view, viz. to secure the sacrament, and to restore the penitent to the grace of God.

There is a second, which he is obliged also as far as he is able, to procure, viz. the amendment of the penitent.

That cure avails nothing, which is followed by a relapse, and the physician who is not concerned to prevent it, complies but with half his duty; and becomes himself guilty of the distemper into which the sick man relapses, and even of death itself, if it befall him. This is the reason why the confessor is obliged not only to advertise the penitent not to return to his sins, but also to shew him the means how to avoid them, and to engage him to put them in execution.

These means are penance, prayer, satisfactory works, as fasting, good deeds, mortification, to which may be added certain conditional penances, that is, some painful things to be performed, or offered by the penitent in case he return again to his sins, and as often as he shall relapse; as to fast, to give alms, or some other painful work for each fall. The apprehensions of these sorts of punishments serve frequently as a bridle to withhold penitents from being tempted to offend God. Lastly, the deferring of absolution, when the penitent does not correct himself, is frequently a very good remedy to make him amend his life. This makes the penitent think seriously of amendment, and labour to reform his vices, which make him unworthy of so great a benefit, and punctually to comply with what the confessor shall enjoin him, to the end that he may be worthy. This remedy ought to be applied with much discretion. The confessor ought to make a vast distinction between penitents, who relapse into their sins through frailty, and those who

*To procure the amendment of the penitent, the second duty of a director.*

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\* St. Aug. ep: ad Vincent.

† Luke x.



return through malice, that is to say, either on set purpose, or through an affected negligence.

He will know the former, by their being extremely troubled to see themselves subject to those relapses, by their using all endeavours to abstain from sin, and practising the means their confessor appoints them. Towards these he must use far more mildness, support their weakness, absolve them more easily, provided they continue to labour on their part to amend their lives.

The latter are those, who not only continue in their wickedness, but do either nothing at all, or very little to refrain from their sins. Towards these more severity must be used, as they always promise amendment without almost ever effecting it, it is often not only profitable, but necessary to defer their absolution, until such time as they have given sufficient proofs of their conversion by abstaining from their sins, and faithfully performing what is appointed for that end.

#### C H A P. IX.

*Of the means which the penitent ought to observe in order to avoid relapses into sin.*

*The Penitent must do four things to prevent relapses.*

**T**HE first is, that he understand perfectly the greatness of the evil, and the imminent danger to which he exposes his salvation for the sick man who has no apprehension of the ill consequences of his disease will never be cured: therefore he must be fully convinced of two things. First, that to fall in mortal sin is of all misfortunes the greatest. Secondly, that a relapse into sin exposes his eternal salvation to an extreme hazard finding himself surprised, when he least thinks of it.

The next thing he ought to do in consequence of this knowledge, is to avoid all those things which have been the causes of this misfortune, or occasion a relapse. This is an indispensable obligation, and the first mark of a penitent soul desirous of recovering her former health. We laugh at a sick man that will not abstain from such meats or actions, as are apprehended prejudicial to him: we say, that he loves his pleasure more than health, and that he is his own murderer. The like is to be said of a penitent when he acts thus. *How long will fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves\*.*

\* Prov. i. 22.

The third is, the choice of a good physician: that, is he must always address himself to the best confessors, and whom he believes endowed with the three above-mentioned qualifications, especially to those who do not neglect the recovery of their penitents, but apply themselves seriously to that effect. The penitent who desires his health, must seek out such physicians: if not, it is an infallible proof that he does not desire to amend. He is afraid lest the confessor should make him sensible of his misery, and put a stop to the disorders of his conscience: a certain sign that he is not willing to be cured. "He that loves truth, that is, his salvation, is not afraid of a monitor, or of having his defects laid open before his eyes \*."

The fourth is, faithfully to apply the remedies which are necessary to cure the soul and preserve it from sin. No one doubts but that this is absolutely necessary; yet few practise it so readily as they believe it. Many penitents wish to amend their lives, but would do it at their ease without pain or trouble. The sight of the remedies is a trouble to them; and when they should put them in execution, their heart fails them, and they will do nothing at all. Is not this to aim at impossibilities, to seek the end without the means to obtain it? The cure without the remedies, and salvation without trouble? This is to act like *the sluggard*, who *willeth, and willeth not* †. 4. This is a faint and imperfect wish to be delivered from their evils, but in reality it is an effectual desire to continue in them, and never to be cured.

You will act otherwise, *Theotime*, if you are truly penitent, and desirous of your salvation, by carefully seeking after and applying the necessary remedies against sin.

The first is, to preserve with care in your heart the spirit of penance, of which you were *General remedies* made partaker in confession, viz. an hatred of *against a relapse*, sorrow for having committed it, and a

resolution to offend no more. Now to preserve this spirit it is necessary to renew these acts every day, which may easily be done.

The second is to perform with this spirit the works of penance, as well those that are enjoined in the sacrament, as others which you impose upon yourself. These works conduce very much to deliver us from our sins.

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\* St. Aug. † Prov. xiii. 4.

The third remedy is prayer. As all our strength is from God, it is but just we make our addresses to him, that he will vouchsafe powerfully to assist us with his grace. Without this it is impossible to cure the distempers of the soul. *Ask, says the Lord, and it shall be given you\**, which is as much as to say, what you do not crave, you shall not receive. But as this means is necessary, so also it is most powerful, and never fails of its effect. *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded†, or frustrated of his desires.* But this prayer must be frequent and fervent. As we have need every day of his holy grace, so we ought always to pray for it. And as we beseech him to vouchsafe his mercies, that we may be saved; so it is but just that we implore them with great fervour and an ardent desire of obtaining what we ask.

The fourth remedy is frequent confession. This is also a necessary means, without which it is morally impossible to be free from a vicious habit, when once engaged therein. It is a sacrament which remits sins past, and gives grace to avoid them for the future. There one renews his sorrow for having offended God, and his resolution thenceforward to be faithful to him; one there receives advice, and means to that effect; one is thereby brought back into the way of salvation, encouraged when he is remitted, and fortified against all possible difficulties. They who neglect this means, will never be freed from their habitual sins; but they who tender their salvation will readily approach to it.

The holy communion is also a very efficacious remedy against relapses. It gives strength against temptations, it weakens our habits, and makes us avoid many venial sins, which lead and dispose to mortal. This is to be understood, when the communion is performed with all necessary dispositions. It produces all the effects proportionably to the greater or less devotion with which we approach that holy table.

The reading also of good books is a most powerful means to keep us in the straight path of virtue. All these are general remedies, and common to all kinds of sins. There are other more particular against each sin considered in its kind, which may consult in the first volume.

\* Luke xi. 9. † Eccli. ii. 22. ‡ Luke xviii.



# INSTRUCTIONS

## CONCERNING THE

## HOLY COMMUNION.

### The PREFACE.

Of the Necessity of this Instruction, and the Order to be observed therein.

**T**HIS instruction is no less necessary than that of penance, because the holy communion completes and perfects what penance had begun, that is to say, it perfectly re-establishes the soul in the grace of God. It preserves, augments, and strengthens that grace, and contributes very much towards final perseverance, supposing it be frequently made use of, and that the receiver approach to it with those dispositions which so holy and so adorable a sacrament requires. Whereas, on the contrary, it exposes the unworthy receiver to the most dreadful of all evils, by changing the fountain of life into the cause of death, and that which of itself is a pledge of love and mercy, into a sentence of condemnation or everlasting death.

If one communicate, though not absolutely unworthily, that is, in the state of mortal sin, yet with some irreverence, or considerable defect in devotion, he is deprived of the better part of that fruit, which otherwise he might receive from the sacrament. He does not only lose many favours, but contracts many infirmities, as coldness in charity, ind devotion, insensibility as to the concerns of salvation, the diminution of our spiritual strength and divine graces, frequent relapses into venial and sometimes into mortal sin.

Thus you see, Theotime, of what importance it is to perform this great action well. No less than your salvation depends upon the right performance of it. Now to do this worthily, it is necessary that we be



well instructed. Whence it is easy to perceive how useful instruction upon this subject is, and how great the obligation of giving your most serious attention to it, that you may reap great spiritual advantage to your soul.

I shall divide this treatise into two parts; whereof the first treats of the doctrine, the second of the practice of holy communion. In the first, I shall declare what it imports us to know concerning this sublime mystery; in the second what we are to do to receive it worthily, and with profit.

In the first part I shall give some general expositions of faith, and the principal mysteries, for the benefit of those who are not already instructed in these important truths.

I hope those, who shall peruse them with care and a desire to learn, will find full and solid instructions in all the fundamental points of religion, and by such means become more capable of receiving the singular advantages of holy communion, and being replenished with these graces which God bestows upon us in this blessed sacrament.

The second part containing only directions for practice, it will be very proper to peruse it often, but particularly upon the eve and day of communion.

## P A R T I.

*Of the truths we ought to know concerning the sacrament of the Eucharist.*

Three things to be known.

**E**VERY Christian that approaches this sacrament ought to be well instructed in three things, of which two are general, the third is peculiar to this sacrament.

First, he must be instructed in faith in general, without which it is impossible to attain to the knowledge of this great mystery of the eucharist. He must understand what this virtue is, which is the basis and ground-work of salvation, as St. Paul says, *Faith is the substance of the things to be hoped for*.\*

Secondly, he must be instructed concerning the principal mysteries of faith, as of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the Catholic Church. Except he believe these truths it is impossible either to come to the knowledge or belief of the holy eucharist.

Thirdly, he must be thoroughly informed in what concerns the sacrament in particular, as the real presence of the Son of God

\* Heb. xi. 1.

the consecrated host, the change of the substance of the bread and wine into that of his body and blood, the effects which this sacrament produces in the soul of the worthy receiver, and the dispositions with which it ought to be received.

C H A P. I.

*Of Faith,*

**F**OR greater ease, we shall treat of this subject by way of question and answer.

*Q. What are we obliged to know concerning faith in general?*

**A.** SEVEN things; viz. What faith is; who is the author of it; what its action; its object; its motive; its rule; and what the conditions requisite that it may be perfect.

*Q. What is faith?*

**A.** IT is a gift of God, or a light from above, by which man being illuminated does firmly believe all those things which God has revealed, and proposed to his church to be believed, whether written, or unwritten.

In this definition is comprised all we are obliged to know concerning faith. First it teaches us, that faith is a supernatural light, proceeding not from us, but from God, and which makes us assent to those truths, the belief whereof is necessary for salvation. It teaches also, who is the author of faith, what its action, and the rest, as we shall see by the following questions.

*Q. Who is the author of Faith?*

**A.** GOD alone. *Faith is the gift of God*, says St. Paul\*, there is none but he can give it. He bestows it upon us by enlightening our understanding with a supernatural light, and inclining the will to consent; hence, though the will concur in accepting the truth proposed, God alone is the first and principal cause thereof, wherefore it is very necessary that we beg it at his hands.

M 4

*Q. What*

\* Ephes. ii. 8.

Q. *What is the action, object, and motive of Faith?*

A. **T**O believe, that is, to hold a truth for certain and assured, without the least doubt, is the proper act of faith.

The object, that is, the things which we are obliged to believe, are all the truths which God has revealed, and which are proposed to our belief.

The motive, or reason why we ought to believe, is divine revelation. We believe a truth, because God, who neither can deceive, nor be deceived, has revealed it. Hence this revelation is always infallible.

Q. *By what ways does God reveal the truth to us?*

A. **B**Y the holy scripture, and by tradition. These are the two ways, whereby God has been pleased to manifest his holy truths; and both of them are equally infallible, because both are equally the word of God, the one written, the other unwritten.

Q. *Which is the rule of Faith?*

A. **W**E call that the rule of faith, whereby we discern the revelations which come, from those that do not come from God, it being certain that there are some false revelations which the devil, the author of lies, proposes by his ministers. Therefore, that we may not be deceived, we stand in need of a certain rule.

This rule is the judgment or the interpretation of the holy church, to which God has given that power, and promised the assistance of his holy spirit, that she may never be deceived.

The proofs are manifest in the scripture: *Behold*, says Christ to his disciples, *I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* \*. He also said, *Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* †. The Apostle says, that the church is *the house of God and the pillar and ground of the truth* ‡. The Son of God commands us to hearken to her even as to himself. *He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me* §. *If he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican* ¶.

Without this rule we can have no faith, because without it we can neither be assured what is divine revelation, which are the

\* Mat. xxviii. 20. † Mat. xvi. 18. ‡ 1. Tim. iii. 15. § Luke 16. ¶ xviii. 17.

true scriptures, nor which is their true sense; wherefore heretics, who refuse to follow the judgment of the church, have neither faith, nor even any certainty of any thing they believe.

They say indeed they follow the scripture, *A capital mistake* but they deceive themselves. For first, how do *of all heretics.* they know, there is such a thing as scripture, but by the testimony of the Catholic church, which assures us of it, and has preserved it from generation to generation, even to these days? Did not St. *Augustine* say \*, and with good reason, " that he would not believe the gospel, except he were moved to it by the authority of the Catholic church? and that if we believe the church, when she tells us we must believe the gospel, why should we not believe her, when she forbids us to believe Manicheus, or heretics." Secondly, it is not enough to follow the scripture, except also they follow and be assured of the true sense of scripture; for as St. *Augustine* says †, " Heresy springs from no other source, but from good scripture ill understood, and boldly maintained." And St. *Hilary* says ‡, that there is no heretic but maintains his blasphemies by the scripture.

If they say that the Holy Ghost inspires them with the true sense of the scripture, and *Another mistake.* the right understanding of its mysteries: Never was any heretic without this plea. Secondly, if it be so, why are there so many different sentiments among them in points of faith? Can the Holy Ghost be contrary to, or contradict himself? Is it possible that he should inspire both truth and falsehood? Thirdly, who does not perceive that this answer authorizes as many religions as there are men? for every one will easily say that he has the divine spirit. Lastly, why do they desire that others should believe them, whilst they affirm that they have the Holy Spirit, since they themselves refuse to believe the church, which requires their assent by so just a title, as is the promise made her by the son of God of the continual assistance of his holy spirit, even to the end of the world?

We must then conclude, and hold as a certain truth, that it is neither our private judgment, nor our interior persuasion, however we may believe it comes from the Holy Ghost, which is capable of being a rule in points of Faith, or can make us see which is a true, and which a false revelation. It is the sole testimony of the Catholic church

\* Contra epist. fundam. c. 5. † Tract 18. in Jo. ‡ L. 2. ad Constant. Augult.



church, and the judgment which she forms of the divine truths, which is and ought to be the rule of our belief. For whilst we submit ourselves to her judgment we cannot fail. As we cannot but mistake and err, when, though ever so little, we depart from the doctrine of the church.

We find in the church the four conditions required for the rule of faith. To be a rule, it must at the same time be *one, certain, manifest and visible.*

The church is *one*; for as there can be but one faith, so there can be no more than one true church, as it is said in the *Nicene creed, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.*

The judgment of the church is *certain* in points of faith, since she can never fail, being, as the Apostle says, *the pillar and ground of the truth* \*. The judgment of the church is *manifest*, because clearly proposed, and by word of mouth explained upon occasion of any emergent difficulty in matters of faith. The church was established by the Son of God to determine debated points: his will is that we have recourse to her on these occasions, according as it was also practised in the Old Testament, where it is said, *The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth* †. The Apostle assures us, that the same method is to be observed in the New Testament, when he says, that the Son of God gave *some Apostles, and other some pastors and doctors for the edifying of the body of Christ, the church: that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine* ‡. For this reason St. *Augustine* affirms, that in all difficulties which occur concerning matters of faith, we must apply to the church. "If any one fear to be deceived in the obscurity of this question, let him consult the church §."

Lastly, the church is *visible*, as consisting of pastors, who have succeeded one another ever since the Apostles, to this present time; and as in all ages one might, so at this very time one may easily address himself to them to be instructed in whatever concerns our faith. This is the city, whereof the son of God speaks *seated on a mountain* ¶, to which all the world may have access, as was foretold by *Isaias, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways,*

\* 1 Tim. iii. 15. † Mal. ii. 7. ‡ Eph. iv. 11, 12. § St. Aug. l. contra Cresconium. ¶ Mat. ii. 3.

and we will walk in his paths : for the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem \*. It was to this city that St. Augustine † sent the Donatists, when he said to them, “ you have the city, whereof he himself who built it, said, that it “ was a city built upon a mountain, and could not be hidden.”

I have purposely expatiated on the rule of faith; because it is a fundamental maxim in matters of faith, that we must hearken to and obey the church : we must receive divine revelations from her alone, from the interpretation she gives of the holy scripture and tradition; the two ways by which God has been pleased to convey his divine truths, mysteries of our holy faith to us. *Important remark.*

*Q. What qualities or conditions ought our faith to have ?*

*A.* IT follows from what we have already said, that faith, to be perfect, must have three conditions; it must be *humble, universal, and firm.*

*Humble*, that is, in matters of faith we are to submit ourselves to the judgment of the church, and not to be wedded to our own sense, nor to our interior persuasion, nor to the judgment of any particular person. Thus God ordained in the Old Testament ‡, where he commanded, that in the difficulties which should occur concerning the performance of the law, every one should have recourse to the priests, and follow exactly their decision : and that under pain of death, in case any should be refractory or disobedient. And in the New Testament he has decreed, that “ he who will not hear the “ church, shall be accounted as an infidel §. *First quality.*

*Universal*, that is, it ought to comprehend, and believe in general all the truths which are proposed by the church to be believed, without excepting any. And the reason is evident; because the church, which proposes them, by reason of the assistance of the Holy Ghost, which is promised her without restriction, is equally infallible in all her judgments, and can be no more deceived in the least, than in the greatest mystery of our faith. St. Augustine, speaking of the books of the sacred scripture, says, “ If I believe “ the gospel, I must also necessarily believe the Acts of the “ Apostles, because the same authority of the Catholic Church “ obliges *Second quality.*

\* Isai. ii. 3. † De unitat. Eccl. c. 14. ‡ Deut. xvii. 8. § Mat. xviii. 17.

"obliges to believe them both\*." We may say the same of all the other truths, which are proposed by the church, for if we believe one, we ought also to believe the others; because it is the same authority, and the same church, which proposes, and gives us assurance of them both. The same St. *Augustine*, speaking of heretics, and those who would give credit to nothing but what they please, says, "By believing in the gospel, what coincides  
" with your fancy, and rejecting what does not so, you rather  
" give credit to yourselves than to the gospel; because, when led  
" by your private spirit, you approve what pleases, and disapprove  
" what displeases you in scripture; you do not submit yourselves  
" to the authority of holy writ, in order to find out your faith,  
" but rather you subject the scripture to yourselves, to judge of it  
" according to your will †."

Lastly, faith ought to be *firm*, that is, free from any, at least *voluntary* doubt: And this *Third quality.* also for the same reason, the infallible authority of the church, which proposes to us the divine truths the objects of our faith, and cannot be deceived in what she proposes to us. So that there is no more reason to doubt of any one truth, than of all the rest. There is not a better way to dispel readily the doubts which arise against any one article of our faith, than to reflect upon the others which one believes with all the certainty imaginable; which yet are not otherwise grounded than upon the same authority of the church: for if we do not doubt of those, neither ought we to question these. In all the doubts which may occur, concerning any point of faith, whether they arise from our own imaginations, or spring from heresy, from new doctrines, or scandal given in the church, we ought to have recourse to this authority as to a secure refuge; a refuge where we shall find the divine *protection from the contradiction of evil tongues* ‡. "If you  
" find tongues which contradict you, heresies raised up against  
" you, and divisions which oppose you, have recourse to the  
" tabernacle of God; adhere and stick fast to the Catholic Church;  
" do not depart from this rule of Truth, and you shall be pro-  
" tected, and guarded from the contradiction of tongues in the  
" tabernacle of God §."

Behold not only a profitable but also a necessary advice, which ought to be practised upon occasion of any doubts in faith, and especially

\* Contra Epist. fundam. † L. 16. cont. Faust. c. 3. ‡ Psalm xxx. 91.  
§ St. Aug. in Psalm xxx. ser. 3.



especially in the beginning of any heresy. Had the heretics of our time followed this good counsel, they would never so unfortunately have continued obstinate in their error, or drawn others into the same ruin, as they have done.

C H A P. II.

*Of the things we are obliged to believe.*

**W**E shall reduce them to four heads. 1. The divinity, or what we are obliged to believe of God. 2. The incarnation, or the humanity of the Son of God, which shall comprehend what we are to believe of *Jesus Christ*. 3. The church. 4. The sacraments. These four things are all contained in the Apostles Creed.

A R T I C L E I.

*What we are obliged to believe of God?*

**F**IRST, that there is one only true God, who is an uncreated being, eternal, independent, infinite in knowledge, in power, in wisdom, in goodness, in justice, and in all other perfections.

Secondly, That in God there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. That all these three are but one true God, having the same divine essence, the same wisdom, the same goodness, the same power, and so of the other divine perfections. That the Son proceeds from the understanding of the Father by a perfect knowledge which the Father conceives of himself, by which he expresses his own image in the Son. That the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, by the mutual love which they bear one another. That these processions do not cause any inequality or dependence, or priority amongst the divine persons, who are all equal and eternal, as being all but one only true God, one in nature, and three in persons.

Thirdly, That God is the author and creator of all things, that he made both heaven and earth, and all the creatures therein, whether visible or invisible, of nothing but by his only word; that he preserves them by his power, and governs them by his wisdom.

Fourthly, That he is the end of all things, particularly of men and Angels, whom he created to adore and serve him, and for whom



whom he has prepared eternal happiness, which consists in the perfect enjoyment of himself in heaven.

## A R T I C L E II.

*What we are obliged to believe of Jesus Christ.*

**T**O understand this article the better, let us divide it into question and answer.

*Q. What is Jesus Christ?*

**A.** **H**E is the Son of God, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, who became incarnate, that is, was made man for our salvation.

*Q. Why was he made man?*

**A.** **T**O redeem us from the sentence of everlasting death, which we had all incurred by the disobedience of our first parents, and to make full satisfaction to divine justice, as well for that first or original sin, as for all the rest which have been committed ever since by other men.

*Q. This incarnation in what does it consist?*

**A.** **I**T consists in the strict and personal union of the eternal word with our human nature, that is, with a mortal body and an immortal soul, such as we have; from which union there results a compound, whom we call *Jesus Christ*, true God, and at the same time true man.

Whence it follows, that in *Jesus Christ* there are two natures, and one only person, the divine and the human nature united in one and the same person of the Son of God, or the eternal word: whereas, in the divinity there is but one nature, and three persons.

By this union the divinity was neither changed into the humanity, nor the humanity into the divinity of our Lord; for that is impossible. But both natures enjoying each of them its own perfections, were strictly united in the person of the Son of God. "So that continuing what he was, that is, God, he became what he was not, that is, man\*."

*Q. How*

\* St. Leo. Serm. de. nativ. Dom.

*Q. How was this divine union accomplished?*

**A.** WHEN the fulness of time was come, in which God had decreed to send his Son for the redemption of mankind, he sent from heaven an Angel to the Blessed Virgin, in whom he had ordained that this adorable mystery should be performed, to declare to her that she should be the temporal mother of the Son of God.

She had no sooner given her consent to these happy tidings, but the almighty power frames in her virginal womb a human body out of her purest blood, creating in the same instant a rational soul to animate it, and in that same moment the eternal word, united in his person the divine and human nature. Thus was fulfilled that of St. John: *The word was made flesh* \*.

The Blessed Virgin having thus conceived the Son of God, by the operation of the power of the Holy Ghost, at the end of nine months she brings him forth into the world, nourishes, maintains, and brings him up as other mothers do their children. The Son of God lived with her thus, unknown to the world, until about the age of thirty years; after which time he began to manifest himself, and to undertake the work of our redemption for which he came.

*Q. What is it that the Son of God has done for our Redemption?*

**A.** CHIEFLY four things: first, he preached publicly his gospel during the space of three years and some months, confirming the truth of his doctrine, his mission, and his divinity, by an infinite number of miracles.

Secondly, he suffered under *Pontius Pilate* a most bitter passion and death upon the cross; upon which he offered himself a bleeding sacrifice in satisfaction to divine justice for the sins of all mankind, in compensation for the infinite injury which sin had done to the divine majesty, and thereby to open the gates of everlasting life to man. Having performed this duty, *the third day he rose again from the death, and forty days after his resurrection he ascended, glorious and triumphant, into heaven: from thence, at the end of the world, he shall come to judge both the living and the dead, according to their merits, who for that end shall be raised from death to life and appear before him, to receive either an*  
eternal

\* Joh. i. 14.

eternal reward for their good, or an everlasting punishment for their evil works.

Thirdly, he established his church purchased with his blood; that is, a congregation of the faithful, who should believe in him, and continue in an uninterrupted succession to the end of the world.

Fourthly, he instituted the sacraments as the means to convey to us the merits of his passion, and as so many precious vessels, wherein is preserved the price of that adorable blood which he has so abundantly shed for us, to the end it might be applied to us, according as our salvation should require.

### A R T I C L E III.

*What we are obliged to believe concerning the Church.*

*The Church is the mystical body of Christ.* **W**E must first believe that it is the mystical body of which Jesus Christ is the head, or a congregation of the faithful holding the same doctrine or faith which he taught, using the same sacraments which he instituted, living under the conduct of the Apostles and succeeding pastors, and acknowledging the same visible head, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the chief bishop and true successor of St. Peter.

*It is One.* Secondly, that there is but one church, as there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, as St. Paul says \*. "He that does not preserve this union, how can he believe that he has faith? He who opposes and resists the church, who abandons the chair of St. Peter, upon which the church is built, how can he hope that he is in the church? since the blessed Apostle teaches this same thing, and shews the sacred tie of unity, affirming, that there is but one body (that is, the church) as there is but one spirit who governs it †."

*It acknowledges the Pope for its visible head.* Thirdly, that this only true church acknowledges the Pope for her visible head, whom Jesus Christ has appointed to govern her, and to be the source and centre of her unity here on earth. "Heresies and schisms spring from hence, that some will not acknowledge in the church one whom Jesus Christ constituted head over the rest, in those words which

\* Ephes. iv. 5.

† St. Cyprian. de unita Ecclesia.



“ he spake to St. Peter, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven\**; and in another place, *feed my sheep†*. Upon one man he builds his church, and gives him charge to feed his flock. And although he bestowed an equal authority upon the Apostles, *as far as concerns the remission of sins*: yet that the unity of the church might more clearly appear, he founded one chair; and it was his will that the unity should take its beginning from one man.....The primacy was given to St. Peter, to shew that the church of Christ, and the chair was one‡. St. Peter was preferred before the other Apostles to be the head of the church; to the end that the head being once appointed, all occasion of division in the church might be removed§.”

Fourthly, we are obliged to believe that there is no salvation for any one out of this one true church. It is an article of faith, which has been constantly held in the church; this having always been an unquestioned and current maxim, that he who will not have the church for his mother, shall not have God for his father. “ Whence St. Jerom¶, being in the east, where there was some division concerning the names of the three persons of the

*No salvation out of the true church, unless for those who labour under an inevitable and involuntary necessity, or an invincible ignorance.*

Blessed Trinity, wrote to Pope Damasus that he was resolved never to depart from him, but inseparably to unite himself to him, as to one who held the chair of St. Peter, upon which, says he, I know that the church is built. Adding, that the church thus built is the only house, where it is lawful to eat the paschal lamb; the ark of Noah, out of which during the flood none were saved; he, that does not gather with the Pope, scattereth; that is, he, who is not united to Jesus Christ, associates himself with Antichrist.”

Fifthly, we are also obliged to believe that this true church is infallible in her judgments in matters of faith, and doctrine concerning

*The church is infallible.*

morals: whether she be assembled in the persons of her pastors and head, the Pope and Bishops, or be not assembled, she universally holds one and the same doctrine. This is also an article of faith, grounded upon the word of the Son of God, who has

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promised

\* Mat. xvi. 18, 19. † John xxi. 17. ‡ St. Cyprian de unitat. Ecclesie. § St. Jerom lib. 1. contra Jovinian. ¶ Ep. 57.



promised that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*\*, his church from whence it follows, that she never either fell, or ever will fall into the least error in points of faith: she being the *pillar and ground of the truth*†.

From what we have hitherto said, we must conclude that all faithful Christians, who desire to secure their faith, and to avoid error in a matter of so great concern, must inseparably adhere, as far as is in their power, the Holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman church, and hear and follow her judgment and doctrine in all things.

#### A R T I C L E IV.

*What we are obliged to believe concerning the Sacraments.*

**W**E are obliged to believe, First, that they are the means instituted by God, whereby he confers his grace upon us either to encrease what we have already received, or to restore what we had lost, as it is expressed in the council of Trent‡.

Secondly, that a *sacrament* may be rightly defined; “a visible sign of invisible grace, instituted by God for our sanctification.”

Thirdly, that this visible sign consists, and is as it were composed of two parts, *the sensible thing*, which is applied in the sacrament as water in baptism: and the *words* which are pronounced, as in the same baptism these words: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. According to that received doctrine delivered by St. Augustine, “By the joining of the words with the element, or material thing, the sacrament becomes compleat §.” One of these two parts is called the matter, the other the form of the sacrament.

Fourthly, that the sacrament being applied by a lawful minister either gives or augments sanctifying grace in the soul of the worthy receiver.

Fifthly, that there are seven sacraments, baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, order, matrimony.

Baptism makes us the children of *Jesus Christ*, washing away the stain of original sin, and restoring our souls to the life of grace: whence St. Paul calls baptism, *the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost*¶.

Confirmation strengthens us in that new life, making us encrease in grace, and fortifying the faith we received in baptism.

\* Mat. xvi. 18. † 1 Tim. iii. 15. ‡ Sess. 7 Proœm. § St. August. tract. 80. in Joan. ¶ Tit. iii. 5.

The holy eucharist is the nourishment of the soul, repairing those damages which charity daily suffers from human frailty.

Penance restores to us the grace of God which we had lost by sin.

Extreme unction gives us strength at the hour of death, that we may be the better able to fight against our spiritual enemies, and is a remedy against spiritual weakness, contracted by our former sins. It also restores corporal health, when expedient.

Order consecrates the ministers of *Christ*, and gives them power to confer the sacraments.

Matrimony sanctifies the contract betwixt man and woman, and gives them grace to comply with the obligations which they draw upon themselves by that indissoluble bond instituted by God for the propagation of mankind, and raised to the dignity of a sacrament by our Saviour *Christ*.

Although all the sacraments produce sanctifying grace, yet they do not every one produce it in the same manner; for there are two, *viz.* baptism and penance, instituted for the remission of sins, which confer it upon those whom they find void of grace, whence they are called the sacraments of the dead; that is to say, of those who are in the state of mortal sin, whom they raise up to the life of grace; whereas all the rest are called the sacraments of the living, in as much as they encrease the grace they find precedently in the soul; and to receive any of these worthily, it is necessary that we be in the state of grace.

The soul in each sacrament is not only sanctified by habitual, but also endowed with actual grace, that is, with a vigour and strength towards the compassing of those particular effects for which it was first instituted.

Moreover, there are three which imprint a character in the soul, baptism, confirmation, and order: this character is a spiritual mark or seal by which God distinguishes the soul of him who receives any of these three sacraments; and as this distinctive mark can never be effaced, none of these three sacraments can be reiterated, or received a second time by the same person without a privilege.

### C H A P. III.

#### *Of the Holy Eucharist.*

ALL that we have hitherto said, whether of faith in general, or in particular of the divinity itself, of the incarnation of

the Son of God, of the holy church, and of the sacraments, serves only as so many steps or dispositions to the belief of the blessed sacrament of the altar, and to render the understanding of this adorable mystery more easy to us; which therefore we shall here endeavour to explain in few words.

I shall reduce what we are obliged to know concerning it into three heads: 1. The real presence of the Son of God in this sacrament. 2. The effects it produces. 3. The dispositions necessary to receive it.

## ARTICLE I.

*Of the real presence of the Son of God in the Holy Eucharist, and of what we are to believe concerning this sacrament.*

**W**E are obliged to believe, that it is a sacrament instituted by *Jesus Christ*, wherein he gives us really and truly his body and blood, under the species or exterior appearance of bread and wine, for our spiritual nourishment and refection.

This general assertion contains several parts, which ought to be well understood, and for this reason I shall explain every one of them in order.

First then, we believe that it is a *sacrament*, that is a visible sign of invisible grace, instituted by God for our sanctification.

Secondly, we believe that this sacrament contains *really Jesus Christ* whole and entire, that is, his body and blood, his soul and divinity.

Thirdly, that *under the species* in the sacrament there remain nothing of the substance, but only the appearance of bread and wine; both substances being truly changed into the body and blood of the Son of God; so that what we see of bread and wine as size, figure, colour, smell, taste, &c. are only the outward and sensible appearance of bread and wine.

Fourthly, that God by his almighty power works this wonderful change by virtue of the words of consecration, in that very moment in which the priest, in the person of *Jesus Christ*, makes an end of pronouncing them.

Fifthly, that in virtue of these divine words the body of the Son of God, without departing from heaven where he still remains, becomes really present under the species of bread, not itself or all alone, but together with his blood, his soul and divinity.

divinity: and his blood also under the species of wine, not singly by itself, but accompanied with his body, his soul, and his divinity.

Sixthly, that when the host is divided, the Son of God is not divided, nor broken; but having the spiritual endowments of a glorified body, is entire in each small particle of the host: so that he who receives any, though the least part of the host, receives *Jesus Christ* whole and entire, as much as if he had received the whole host. And when the host is consumed, the body of the Son of God is not consumed nor corrupted; that divine body being incapable of any alteration: what happens to it in that moment is only this; it ceases to be in the sacrament, when the appearance of bread or wine ceases to exist.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Of the effects of the Holy Eucharist.*

FROM what has been said, it is easy to judge of the great effects this sacrament ought to produce. As God has wrought all these so incomprehensible wonders for our sake, they must needs be designed to work in us most powerful effects of his grace.

The Son of God by his infinite wisdom has comprised them all in one word, saying: *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I interchangeably abide in him who eats me\*.*

The flesh of the Son of God, as a divine nourishment, works in the soul of the worthy receiver the same effects spiritually, which the best corporal nourishment produces corporally in the body of those who take it. Now the effects of corporal nourishment are four or five. 1. It preserves life. 2. It gives increase to the body. 3. It strengthens it. 4. It preserves it against distempers. Lastly, it enables us to labour, and to comply with all our respective duties. By these we may judge of the effects of the holy Eucharist.

The first is the preservation of grace, which *First effect.*  
is the life of the soul, and therefore it is called  
the *bread of life*†, and *Christ's flesh for the life of the world*‡.

The second is the encrease of this same  
grace, and of the Christian virtues, faith, *Second effect.*  
hope, and charity. This effect, however it

N 3

be

\* Joh. vi. 56, 57. † Joh. vi. 48. ‡ 1b. 52.



be common to all the sacraments, yet it is more peculiar to this, as being more particularly instituted for the nourishment of the soul, and to make it increase in a spiritual life.

The third is, courage to fight against sin, and the temptations which incline to it. "It is  
*Third effect.* "a preservative against mortal, and a remedy  
"against venial sin\*."

The fourth effect is the healing of all spiritual  
*Fourth effect.* distempers, the passions and disorderly affections of the soul: The abatement of our concupiscence, or the giving of new strength to overcome it: The weakening of anger, envy, pride, and other vices. "If any one  
"does not find so frequent or so violent motions of anger, envy,  
"impurity, or of other like passions, let him give thanks to the  
"body and blood of our Lord; for it is the virtue of the sacrament which produces in him these effects; and let him rejoice,  
"that the worst of ulcers begins to heal†."

The last is perseverance in the grace of God,  
*Fifth effect.* and in the way of salvation, in the midst of the various and imminent dangers which we encounter in this life, and particularly when we draw near death; whence it was given formerly to martyrs when they were ready to suffer for the name of *Jesus Christ*: and the church always takes care to impart this sacrament to the sick when they are in danger of death, that so they may be strengthened in that dangerous passage, and happily arrive at the haven of salvation by means of this divine nourishment, thence called the *Viaticum*.

All these admirable effects evidently prove the greatness and excellence of this divine sacrament, and ought effectually to move us frequently to approach to it, and not neglect so many and so signal favours, as God there presents to us. But remember that it does not produce these effects, except in such persons, as are rightly disposed to receive it.

### A R T I C L E III.

*Of the dispositions required to communicate as we ought.*

**C**ORPORAL nourishment requires three dispositions, *Life*, *Health*, and *Action*; it being manifest that the body cannot receive nourishment unless it be living, nor digest that nourishment unless

\* Conc. Trid. Sess. 13. c. 2. † St. Bernard Serm. de cœna Domini.

unless it be in health, nor receive any benefit from thence unless by its action it assists in converting the food into its own substance, and using the strength it receives.

Thus the Eucharist, that celestial food, requires three dispositions in the soul. The first is sanctifying grace, which is the *life* of the soul, which cannot continue with mortal sin, which deprives us of this supernatural life of the soul. Without this life the soul not only receives no benefit from communion, but suffers also much detriment from this holy table, in as much as she becomes guilty of a new mortal sin, a sacrilege, which she commits by receiving the author of life into the habitation of death, the author of light into the place of darkness; and *Jesus Christ* into the company of the Devil. This made St. Paul warn all communicants to examine themselves well when they approach to this holy table; because *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself\**.

The second disposition is the interior health of the soul, which requires first, that she be free from any affection to venial sin. Secondly, that she be not governed either by passions or affections that may hinder her from preparing to receive *Jesus Christ*. And although these defects do not render the communicant absolutely unworthy, or the communion sacrilegious, yet they cause very ill effects, and considerably diminish the fruits which otherwise it would produce. They hinder the soul from digesting this sacred food by good thoughts and holy affections. And as nourishment which lies indigested on the stomach, causes sickness in the body; so this divine sustenance, by means of these indispositions, becomes prejudicial to the soul. Thereby we contract tepidity and coldness in devotion. Charity and other virtues are considerably diminished, our good actions become weak and feeble, and ourselves by degrees insensible to all that conduces to piety: And thus by degrees we are often drawn into mortal sin.

The third disposition is *Action*, that is, actual devotion, which is requisite when we receive the Holy of Holies, and the author of holiness itself. This devotion consists in the practice of christian virtues, of which we shall speak in Part II. of this instruction.

## ARTICLE IV.

*Of an unworthy communion.*

**A**N ancient lawgiver being asked why he had made no laws against parricides, made answer, because he supposed that crime to be impossible, and that there could not be found children, so degenerate and unnatural, as to attempt the life of their own parents. I wish we could say the same with truth concerning unworthy communion, or that we could truly say that in giving instructions for communion, it is not necessary to forewarn Christians to avoid that so horrid a sacrilege, as being unheard of among them. Alas! the contrary is too true. This crime, though a thousand times greater, yet is much more common among Christians than that of parricide. They have an horror (and with good reason) of depriving those of breath, from whom they received their life; yet they are not afraid of murdering and crucifying again, as much as in them lies, our Saviour *Christ*, by receiving him into a polluted breast. Nature has imprinted in them a deep and lasting respect for those from whom they have only received a mortal and fading life; but they easily forget the reverence they owe to *Jesus Christ*, notwithstanding he nourishes them with his own substance, his precious *Blood*, and offers them by his presence a spiritual and immortal life, and a pledge of everlasting happiness. Is it possible then there should be found souls capable of so black a deed, so horrible a crime? Surely they are only those, who either have no faith, or such as have never considered the enormity of this sin, who can commit it; for he must surpass the very Devils in malice, who falls into such a sin, if he have but the least knowledge how grievous a crime it is, and what dreadful consequences follow from it.

The enormity of this sin appears: 1. From that remarkable saying of our Lord himself, *Give not that which is holy to dogs* \*. If it be the sin of an unworthy communion, a great sacrilege to give to dogs things consecrated to God; what crime must it needs be to give the holy of holies to a soul an enemy to God, more impure and filthy than the very dogs? and what sin must it be in those to receive the body of our Lord, who being no better than dogs, as it is said in the *Apocalypse* †, and being under this character excluded

\* Mat. vii. 6. † *Apocalypse* xxii. 15.

ed from the sanctuary, yet have the impudence to eat the bread of children, the bread of the very angels themselves?

2. From that serious charge of St. Paul, *Whoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord* \*. This sentence is a thunderbolt, which ought to terrify all those who are so miserably unfortunate as to communicate in mortal sin. They are *guilty of the body and of the blood* of the Son of God: that is, they despise and injuriously treat this adorable body and blood, whilst they receive it into a profane place, into the temple of satan, into a soul polluted with mortal sin. It is particularly verified on this occasion what St. Paul relates elsewhere †, that it is to crucify *Jesus Christ again*, to scoff at him, to trample him under foot, and spill his blood by which they were sanctified. Can we think of these things without horror? We never call to mind without a certain detestation the inhuman treatment the *Jews* and soldiers gave to our Saviour *Jesus Christ* in the time of his bitter passion; and can we be so insensible in our own case, as not to detest those affronts we offer him, even worse than those of the *Jews*, whilst we unworthily receive him?

St. Chrysostom explaining those words of St. Paul, *Whoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord* ‡. “Why so? says this holy father §, and his answer is, because he has spilt that blood, and by that action he has not offered a sacrifice, but committed a murder; for he who approaches unworthily to this divine table, and receives no fruit from thence, resembles them, who formerly pierced the body of our Lord, not to drink, but to shed his blood ¶. Consider, says he, what just indignation you conceive against him who betrayed *Jesus Christ*, and against those who crucified him: therefore consider lest you also be equally guilty of the body and blood of the Son of God. It is true, they killed his most sacred body, but you, after so many and so often repeated benefits bestowed upon you, receive him into an unclean and polluted soul ||.

“Unworthy communicants offer violence to the body of *Jesus Christ*, which sin is a more grievous offence in the sight of God, than it is for a Christian to abjure him before Infidels \*\*.”

3. You

\* 1 Cor. xi. 27. † Heb. vi. 6. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 27. § Hom. xxvii. || St. Chyfoft. hom. 27 in 1 Cor. xi. || Hom. 60. \*\* St. Cyprian. de lapsis.



3. You must remember an unworthy communion is the sin of *Judas*. It was he who first committed it, and those who fall into it since, imitate his example and become his disciples. They receive him, as *Judas* did, in a guilty soul: they betray him not indeed to the *Jews*, but, which is worse, to the Devil who dwells in them. What punishment ought they not to dread from such an enormous crime? ought they not to remember how that perfidious Apostle was immediately possessed by the Devil in the moment that he received *Jesus Christ*? for since they imitate him in his sin, they cannot avoid being partakers of his punishment, as we shall presently see.

Such a mischievous cause cannot but produce most fatal effects. The death of the soul, which it infallibly brings, is the first evil following from it. This death is an encrease of that other, wherein the soul lay buried before by the sin in which he received the sacrament. It is a farther banishment from the grace of God, and a farther subjection to the power of Satan.

From this death follow other most dismal effects, as the falling into new sins, spiritualness, encrease of vices and passions, which make a soul to groan under the yoke of her captivity, and hinder her from returning again to God by true repentance. The prophet has comprised these effects in few words, when speaking against the enemies of *Jesus Christ*, he prays to God thus: *Let their table become as a snare before them, and a recompense, and a stumbling block. Let their eyes be darkened that they see not, and their back bow thou down always\**.

If those, who persecuted *Jesus Christ* without knowing him, are punished so severely, what ought not Christians to expect, when they knowingly treat him so ill in his own person. Histories are full of examples of divers punishments which God has inflicted upon this so detestable a sin.

St. Paul† attributes to the effect of unworthy communions the great number of distempers, and deaths with which the *Corinthians* were afflicted.

St. Cyprian affirms, " That in his time there were many whose bodies were possessed by the Devil, for having communicated unworthily; and also that many had lost their senses and be-

" come

\* Psalm lxxiii 23. † 1 Cor. xi. 30.

" come distracted and mad upon the same account\*." And St. *Chrysostom* assures us, that the same thing happened in his time.

The same St. *Cyprian* reports, " That a Christian woman having partaken in private of the sacrifices of the idols, and coming not long after to communicate with the Christians, had no sooner received the Son of God, then she found herself tormented, as if she had taken poison, and expired upon the spot."

He speaks of another, " Who going to receive the precious body of the Son of God in the state of sin, as she opened the vessel in which it was enclosed, there issued out a flame of fire, which prevented her receiving it. Another Christian going to do the same, instead of the consecrated host, which he expected to have found in the place where he had reserved it, found nothing but ashes."

He also recounts, that " a little child, to whom his pagan nurse had given a little wine consecrated to the idols, being afterwards carried by his mother to the church at the time of the holy sacrifice of the mass, was not able to swallow one drop of the consecrated wine, which the deacon had put into his mouth. The sacred Eucharist could not endure to stay in a body and mouth defiled and profaned only by the touch of a forbidden drink." But if it could not stay in this body, whose soul was altogether innocent, what may we say of those, whose souls are altogether guilty?

These examples are sufficient to make every one reflect, " That if he have not yet received the same punishment for his unworthy communion (if he have been guilty of it) he has nevertheless deserved it as much as they. Let every one consider not so much the punishment which another has received, as what he himself has deserved; and that he do not believe he has avoided the chastisement, because it is delayed; since he ought rather to be much more afraid, to whom God in his just judgment has deferred the punishment of his sins to a longer time."

## ARTICLE

\* St. *Cyprian*. de lapsis.

## ARTICLE V.

*Of the end we ought to propose to ourselves in the Holy Communion.*

**B**ESIDES purity of conscience, it is necessary to have a right intention to communicate well; for an action, how good soever it may be in itself, loses its value for the want of a good intention, and moreover becomes evil and vicious, if it be done for an evil end. This being true in all good actions whatsoever, it is still much more in this of communion; for as much as it is certain, that nothing but what is pure and holy, ought to draw near to and receive purity and holiness itself, and that it is a contempt of the greatness and sanctity of God, to approach to him upon any other motive, than that of pleasing him and meriting his grace and favour.

For this reason in the Old Testament it was his will, that none should use upon his altar any other than holy fire, which he had ordained for the use of the sacrifices: and he punished with sudden death the two sons of *Aaron*, who were so rash as to make use of profane fire. By this figure we learn, that to approach to him, it is not sufficient to be holy, but there is also required an intention altogether pure and holy, and that an evil and profane intention does grievously offend him. We must then approach to the holy communion with an intention totally pure, and propose to ourselves an end altogether holy in this so great and so august an action: now that we may perform this duty, two things are necessary.

The first is not to propose to ourselves any evil end, as the motive of our communion; as hypocrisy, to dissemble and conceal some fault with an appearance of piety, vanity to be esteemed virtuous, human respect lest we should displease any one, or to please men rather than God. These three motives are but too frequent among those, who are not sufficiently instructed concerning the intention, which we ought to have in communicating, and particularly among young people: wherefore they ought most carefully to avoid them. The first is the greatest fault, and ordinarily speaking renders the communion sacrilegious; the other two deprive us of the best part of the fruit, it otherwise would produce.

The second is to direct our intention to the service of God and our salvation: to God, to please him the more and to unite ourselves thereby more strictly to him; to our salvation, to promote it by obtaining

obtaining, by means of the holy communion, the graces which we stand most in need of; as, to amend our faults; to resist temptations; to strengthen us in the practice of virtues.

These two ends we find in our Lord's prayer; where the three first petitions contain what we can wish for the greater honour of God; and the other four comprehend what is necessary for our salvation. It is a very profitable exercise to propose to ourselves for the end of our communion, the obtaining of the accomplishment of these seven petitions of which this divine prayer consists.

It is also good to add to this general intention some particular end, according to our present necessities; as, to obtain some particular grace we stand in need of, to correct in ourselves some fault, and to advance in some particular virtue.

Lastly, the right and religious intention which we ought to have in communion, is the very same which *Christ* proposed to himself when he first instituted this divine sacrament. Now his intention was, as he himself declared, that he might abide in us, and we in him\*. He dwells in us by his grace, and the assistance of his holy inspirations; and we remain in him by love, and the obedience we render to him: propose to yourself this end, and you will communicate according to the intention of *Jesus Christ*.

\* John vi. 57.



## P A R T. II.

*Of the practice of communion, or what we must do to communicate as we ought.*

**N**EXT to the purity of conscience and uprightness of intention, there remains a third disposition, that we may communicate with more fruit, and obtain a larger portion of grace, and this is actual devotion, which we ought to have when we communicate.

There are almost innumerable ways of practising this devotion, but I am persuaded there is none more profitable, and at the same time more solid, than that which is reduced to the practice of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity.

These three comprehend the practice of all other Christian virtues: and as it is necessary that our souls be possessed of them to be in a condition to communicate worthily, one cannot better receive *Jesus Christ* nor afford him a more grateful reception, than if, by way of preparation, in the time of communion, and immediately after it, are practised the acts of these three divine virtues.

## C H A P. I.

*Of the necessity of faith to communicate well.*

**W**E have already declared in the first part, that faith is a gift of God, by which we believe the truths he has revealed to us. And this occasioned a distinction which we must observe, as well in this virtue as in the other two, *viz.* betwixt faith as it is a virtue, and the same as it is an action.

The virtue of faith is that interior light given us by God, that we may know and believe the truth.

The action is the actual belief which we give to the truth revealed, when we say, I believe this truth.

The one and the other are necessary for communion: the virtue of faith, without which the communion would be criminal; and an act of faith is requisite for obtaining the benefits annexed to it.

The great difficulty is not in having the virtue of faith; for all those who are baptized have received it in baptism; and they preserve it still, except they have lost it either by misbelief, or any wilful doubt; in which case it must be repaired by believing, and doing penance.

But

But as to what concerns acts of faith, they require an application of the mind and heart, to practise them as we ought, that is to say, with the necessary knowledge and constancy, whereof we are about to treat.

## A R T I C L E I.

*To communicate well, it is not sufficient to have faith, but we must practise the acts thereof, and how profitable they are in communion.*

**W**HOEVER then is without faith is an unworthy communicant, since *without faith it is impossible to please God* \*. And he that does not please God cannot receive worthily. It is also necessary to have faith not only in regard of all the mysteries of our religion, but in particular of this; and it is required that we have made acts of faith, which we have never revoked nor changed.

But I say moreover, that to receive the benefit of communion we must practise the acts of this faith before, at the time, and after communion; and that the chief fruit of this grand and important action depends upon the punctual performance of the acts of these three virtues, faith, hope, and charity.

The reason is very obvious; for it is certain, that the sacraments work their effects proportionably to the measure of the disposition of the receiver; and that they give a far greater

*Why the communicant must make acts of faith.*

plenty of graces to those who are interiorly better disposed, and render themselves more worthy of them: now this due preparation of the heart is made by acts of Christian virtues, and particularly by those of faith, hope, and charity, which are the first in dignity, and contain all the rest. That which St. Cyprian affirms of the sacrament of baptism is verified in all the others, but more especially in that of the Holy Eucharist: "That we draw from thence more grace, according to the greatness and capacity of the faith we bring with us; one needs no more than ardently desire it, and open his heart to God, and give him room to fill it †." Where it is to be observed, that this holy father, in these excellent words, points out the three virtues we have already spoken of. He says, that with this strong faith it is necessary that we desire the grace of God, and open our hearts to receive it. Now we desire by hope; and we open our hearts by charity and the love of God.

Moreover let us add, as the proper and peculiar reason for making acts of the theological virtues when we partake of the holy

\* Heb. xi. 6. † Ep. ad Donat.

holy Eucharist, that it is a celestial banquet, wherein we receive the nourishment of our souls. Now who is there but knows that meat, except it be eaten with a good appetite, and with a stomach well disposed to digest the food by its natural heat, and to change it into its own substance, does little good? This is yet more certain in spiritual nourishment, which requires neither less action, nor concurrence of our soul to receive the benefit intended by it. And without a doubt we need not seek any other cause of the small advantage we draw from our communions, although in the state of grace, than the coldness and indevotion with which we perform this duty, which stops the hands of *Jesus Christ*, and hinders him from imparting his favours to those who receive him with so much indifference.

If this reason were not sufficiently convincing, I should add also (without leaving the comparison of a feast) that we ought indeed to come clothed with the nuptial garment (that is, with sanctifying grace) to this sacred banquet of holy communion; but this ought not to satisfy those who desire to communicate in such manner, as to reap a suitable advantage from thence: for to let this suffice would be, as if a man, being invited to a feast by a person of quality, should content himself to go thither in his best apparel, but should refuse to discourse with him, or speak one word. What would we say of such behaviour as this? Would there not be just cause to judge, that this person had but little regard or esteem for him whose invited guest he was? and that he contemned, or at least slighted his friendship, and the particular favours which he might receive at his hands? And yet this is what you yourself are guilty of, *Theotime*, in respect of *Jesus Christ*, when you communicate with tepidity and devotion.

Remember, I beseech you, that it does not please our Lord to be received in this manner, and that you lose innumerable favours by this your extraordinary coldness. Consider how ill this corresponds with that pressing and ardent love with which he invites you to this feast, and with that earnest desire he has to receive you there, saying to you now, what formerly he did to his disciples: *With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you* \*.

Thus when he invites a soul to him, he does not only require that she appear in his presence, but he expects to hear her voice. *My dove*, says he, my well beloved soul, *show me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely* †.

\* Luke xxii. 15.

† Cant. ii. 14.



By the face, he gives us to understand the beauty of the soul, which consists in sanctifying grace, and the ornament of virtues; and by the voice he points at the acts of these same virtues, which make a concert and harmony most pleasing to God.

A R T I C L E II.

*Of the nature of acts of faith for communion.*

LET us now come to the practice of faith, and see how it must be employed in holy communion. That we may employ it to advantage, we must be well instructed in, and fully convinced, of the truths relating to this divine mystery. Among these truths there are two, on which one may practise acts of faith with great advantage. 1. The real presence of the Son of God in the Eucharist, with the wonders which occur in this mystery. See Part I. Chap. 3. Art. I. 2. The effects which it produces in the soul of that person who worthily receives it. See Part I. Chap. II. Art. II. Exercise your faith upon these two points when you communicate, but see that they be acts of a steadfast and fervent faith.

*An act of faith on the real presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament.*

MY Saviour Jesus Christ, I firmly believe from the bottom of my heart, that thou art truly present in the sacred host: I believe that it contains thy body and thy precious blood, accompanied with thy soul and thy divinity.

I believe that by virtue of the words of consecration, and in the moment they are pronounced, the bread is changed into thy body, and the wine into thy blood.

I believe this truth upon the assurance of thy holy words, and upon the authority of thy holy church, which thus teaches me to believe.

I believe it firmly, and without hesitation, renouncing from my heart all doubts, which may ever come into my mind concerning this article. *I do believe Lord; help thou my unbelief\**. Believing thus, I adore thee in this blessed sacrament from my very soul, and I acknowledge thee for my Lord and for my God, as St. Thomas did†.

*On the wonders which occur in the blessed sacrament.*

MY Lord and my God, I acknowledge all the mighty things which thou hast wrought in this holy mystery; grant me, I beseech thee, grace to understand them, for they far exceed the capacity of my soul. *Who shall declare the powers of the Lord? Who shall set forth all his praises‡?*

Vol. II.

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I know

\* Mar. ix. 23.

† Joh. xx. 28.

‡ Psalm cv. 2.



I know by faith, and I acknowledge that thou art really in the sacred host, without departing from heaven, where thou art seated on the right hand of thy eternal Father.

That thou art in innumerable places in the same instant, and in as many as there are consecrated hosts.

That the substance of bread and wine is changed into that of thy body and thy blood.

That of the bread and wine there remain only the appearances, without their substance which supported them before, and that thou dost miraculously preserve them.

That thy body is in the whole host, and in every part thereof.

That it is as equally whole and entire under the least, as under the greatest host.

That when the host is broken thy body is not divided, but that it is entire in each part of the consecrated host.

That when the host is consumed thy body is not consumed, but only ceases to be where it was before.

That the good and bad equally receive thee as to the reality; but unequally only as to the effect, the one finding life therein, the other death.

O my Saviour, I acknowledge all these truths: I firmly believe all these wonders; I adore thy power which has wrought them: I praise thy infinite goodness that was pleased to prepare them for me; and I say from the bottom of my heart with *David*: *I will give praise to thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: I will relate all thy wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name*\*

I acknowledge that thou hast really fulfilled in this mystery the prophecy of *David*†, wherein he said, that as a special effect of thy mercy, thou hast made an abridgment and memorial of thy wonders in bestowing food upon those who fear thee.

In this faith, and with this acknowledgment, I presume to approach at present to this adorable banquet, where thou bestowest upon me this divine food of thy body and blood, that thou mayst fill me with thyself and thy divine spirit. O *Jesus*! grant that I may approach to thee with the sentiments of respect and humility due to thy infinite majesty: Who am I, O my God, that thou shouldst work such great wonders for my sake? Vouchsafe at least that I be not unworthy of them, and that I may now receive thee with a pure heart, with a clear conscience, and with a sincere and true faith. Pardon me my sins, which have rendered me most unworthy

\* Psalm ix.      † Psalm cx. 4.

unworthy to approach thee. I detest them from the bottom of my heart, because, O my God, they are displeasing to thee: I here renounce them for the future, and I promise to be faithful to thee. Proceed then, my soul, raise thyself up to go and receive thy God; and to receive at his hands all the favours which he has prepared for thee in this divine sacrament. *Turn, O my soul into thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee\*.*

*On the effects which the Holy Eucharist produces in the soul.*

**I**F you have time before communion, acknowledge in the presence of God the admirable effects which it produces: desire earnestly to be partaker of them, and say from the bottom of your heart as follows.

I acknowledge, O Saviour of souls, the wonderful effects which thou workest in those who worthily receive thee; the many and singular tokens of thy love thou bestowest upon them, and the favours thou communicatest to them.

I acknowledge, that as a divine food thou fillest our souls with thyself; thou preservest in us the life of thy grace; thou makest us increase more and more therein; thou strengthenest us in our weakness; thou curest our infirmities; thou preservest us from sin; thou givest us strength to persevere in thy grace, and to walk secure amidst the dangers of this mortal life, till we come to everlasting glory. O my God! blessed be thy holy name for these so many favours: make me worthy to partake of all thy mercies in this holy communion.

Approach to the communion with this faith, saying with the infirm woman in the gospel: *If I shall but touch his garment I shall be healed†.*

After communion, withdrawing yourself from the holy table into some convenient place, adore profoundly our Lord, who has vouchsafed to come and dwell within you; and considering attentively the great favours which he has bestowed upon you by his divine presence, pronounce from your heart those excellent words of David: *Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him: and his wonderful works to the children of men. For he hath satisfied the empty soul; and hath filled the hungry soul with good things‡.* O my God, be thou blessed for so many favours which thou hast now bestowed upon me, and for all the blessings with which thou hast

O 2

enriched

\* Ps. cxiv. 7. † Mat. ix. 21. ‡ Ps. cvi. 3, 9.

enriched me, after the great want and miseries which I endured, when by my pleasures and my passions I had departed from thee. Was not I most miserable and blind, to seek in these vain pleasures repose and happiness, which are not to be found but in thee alone? I removed myself to a far distance from thee to ruin myself for ever; but thy goodness was such, that it withdrew me from the precipice whither I was running, enlightening me with thy rays, and calling me back to thee by thy grace. Thou hast pardoned me all my sins, and to complete all these favours, thou gavest thyself to me that I may dwell with thee. O my God! be thou blessed for all these infinite mercies, and let all the saints supply my defects, and praise thee in my behalf\*.

Stir up your soul, that is, yourself, to praise God for all the benefits which he has at present conferred upon you, with those grateful sentiments of the same prophet †, considering them attentively one after another.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me praise his holy name.*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee: who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases: who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion: who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.*

After you have pondered well upon these sacred words, and raised in yourself all the motions of gratitude and acknowledgment to God for the many and great favours he has done you, you shall conclude with a strong resolution to renew yourself, that is to say, totally to change your life, to amend your faults, to dedicate yourself from henceforth entirely to God.

You must implore his grace to fulfil these resolutions; and to this effect you must beg of him a steady and constant faith, acts of which you have endeavoured to exercise in this communion: beseech him that he will vouchsafe to augment it, not only in respect of this holy mystery, but also in regard of all the other Christian truths, and principles of eternal life: to the end that by this faith you may surmount all the difficulties and obstacles you shall meet with in your journey thither; for it is most certain, that those who have this great virtue strongly imprinted in their souls, overcome all, whatsoever difficulties occur in the way of salvation, as St. Paul hath clearly shewn in his epistle to the Hebrews: *Through faith*

\* Ps. cxliv. 10. † Ps. cii. ‡ Chap. xi. 33.



faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises\*. But all this is to be understood of an ardent faith, enlivened with the flames of charity.

## CHAPTER II.

*Of Hope, the second disposition for Communion.*

HAVING not yet said any thing of this virtue, farther than what concerned the examen on the first commandment, where I related the sins which are opposite unto it, I shall treat of it in this place so far as may be necessary to make it well known to all those who are not sufficiently instructed in it.

### ARTICLE I.

*What is Hope?*

IT is the second of the three theological virtues. They are so called, because God is not only their motive and end, (as in all other Christian virtues) but also their first and principal object.

To expect from the hand of God the things he has promised and prepared for his servants, is the proper effect of this virtue; wherefore it is defined *a certain expectation of eternal bliss, and of the means to attain it.* This expectation is the proper act of this virtue of hope; which is a certain judgment which we form, that God will be pleased to grant us everlasting life, if we correspond with his holy grace; for as St. Bernard observes very well, "Faith tells us there are great rewards prepared for God's servants: Hope says, these are reserved for me. Charity is the third, and says, I run that I may reach them†." It is of this expectation, which the prophet speaks, *The Lord is my portion, therefore will I wait for him‡.* And St. Paul, when he assures us, that he glories in the hope of the glory, or happiness of the Sons of God§; and when he exhorts all Christians to a good life, *Looking for the blessed hope, says he, and coming of the glory of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ¶.*

This hope is certain and assured, in as much as it is built upon God's promise, who can never fail of his word, having both a will and a power to perform whatever he is pleased to promise. This

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made

\* Chap. xi. 33. † Serm. 10. in Psalm xc. ‡ Lam. iii. 24. § Rom. v. 2. ¶ Tit. iii. 13.



made the same Apostle affirm, *I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day* \*.

But whereas these divine promises are only conditional, and made to such as are his faithful servants, our hope ought also always to suppose this condition of our fidelity; and thus the certainty of hope ought always to be accompanied with a holy distrust in ourselves, which makes us work our salvation with fear and trembling; and as St. Peter has it, *Labour that by good works we may make our calling and election sure* †.

## A R T I C L E II.

*Of the Advantages which we expect through Hope.*

**W**E expect two advantages, Grace and Glory; this as the end prepared for us, that as the means whereby to obtain this end. God, is a tender and wise father, whose goodness prepares an inheritance for his children, and whose wisdom finds out means, whereby they may come to the possession of it.

Glory will be our supreme and final happiness, wherein our soul shall see God as he is in himself face to face, and thence conceive so entire and perfect a love of him, that she will be filled with an incomprehensible joy, and a happiness that shall not receive either the least alteration or any end.

Even our body shall have its share in this glory: for after the resurrection the glorious splendour of the blessed soul, united to the body, shall by the reflection of her rays render it not only immortal, but exempt it from all possibility of change, endowing it with the four qualities, which St. Paul † has discovered to us, Impassibility, Brightness, Agility, Subtily. The first will exempt it from all pain or grief; the second will render it bright and shining like the sun; the third will enable it to fly in an instant, wheresoever it pleases without the least trouble; and by the fourth, it will penetrate the most solid bodies.

Behold what we expect after this life both for our soul and body! And as to what concerns this present life, we expect from the hands of God the means whereby we may obtain this happy end: forasmuch as of ourselves, and by all our natural endeavours

vours

\* 2 Tim. i. 12. † 2 Pet. i. 10. ‡ 1 Cor. xv.

ours, though never so great, left to ourselves, we are not able to arrive at it.

This end, in as much as it is a supernatural good, requires in our soul a disposition proportionable to it, and this is sanctifying grace, the seed of *Glory*, and the precious *pledge* of that eternal inheritance\*. This grace is a supernatural quality infused by God into our soul at the instant he admits us *Grace explained.* into his friendship; a quality which remits sin, sanctifies the soul, embellishes and renders her acceptable to God, and gives her a certain right to life everlasting†.

Now since this grace, this disposition to glory, is also supernatural, it is necessary we have the assistance of a powerful hand to obtain it, and this can be no other than the hand of God, as there is none but God alone who can endow the soul with sanctifying grace.

This assistance is called grace, because it is gratuitously and out of God's pure mercy bestowed upon us; but it is called actual, because it is not habitual and permanent like sanctifying grace. It is that action by which God moves the powers of our soul, our understanding and will, disposing her to justification, and enlightening her understanding by good thoughts, which he inspires her with; and moving her will by the holy affections which he vouchsafes to excite in her.

This assistance produces three effects in us; for first, it awakes our soul by interior illuminations and religious motions, exciting her to work out her salvation. 2dly. When she is thus moved, it assists her in the due performance of that good, which is proposed to her, and raises her up to God by acts of faith, hope, contrition, and the love of God, all which dispose her to receive at the same time the remission of her sins, and justifying grace. 3dly. As soon as she has received this grace, this assistance affords her still means to preserve herself against the violence of temptations, and to persevere constant even to the end, by flying evil, and performing good works.

Hence proceed the different names by which we call this actual grace: for the first we call exciting, operating or preventing grace: the second, assisting or co-operating grace: the third, the grace of perseverance. God has bestowed upon us all these graces for our salvation; but we are to observe that they have not always their full and entire effect upon the will; for she being only moved and

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\* Eph. i. 14. † Tit. iii. 7.

pressed, and not necessitated by these graces, has a power either to resist or neglect them, according as the council of *Trent*\* remarks; may very often does resist: for we are but too apt to harden our hearts against the voice of God, and resist the Holy Ghost, as the scripture expresses it †.

This admonition may serve to teach us an important truth, that it is not enough to expect from God the means of salvation, but that we ought to take great care to be faithful to, and carefully to co-operate with his grace; and also that we ought daily to beg of him, that he will vouchsafe to continue and replenish our hearts therewith, lest by our sins we render ourselves unworthy of them.

### A R T I C L E III.

*It is necessary to distinguish well a righteous Hope from that which is vitious.*

**T**HIS distinction is of the highest importance, for as much as the greatest part of the world deceive themselves therein, by mistaking false for true hope; and from this mistake proceeds the damnation of innumerable Christians. There is no one but hopes to be saved; but because their hopes are ill grounded, and they hope otherwise than they ought, they lull themselves asleep in this foolish hope, and approaching to their end, they find themselves upon the brink of a precipice, when they imagined themselves in safety.

Such is their hope who expect salvation though they live ill, and expect a happy death after a wicked life. Now how many are there of these? and what numbers are herein deceived.

Such is their hope who believe it necessary for salvation to live a good life, but still defer their conversion, thinking that God will wait their repentance, notwithstanding their wicked course of life, and their perpetual abuse of his graces.

Such is their hope who sin in confidence of pardon, and who are wont to say, when they have offended, that God's mercy is great, and that he will forgive their sins,

Such is their hope who imagine they shall be converted whenever they please; or that his grace will be always in their power; or that, let them do what they will, it will never forsake them.

Such

\* Sess. 6. c. 5. † Acts vii. 51.



Such is their hope who wilfully, and by some signal negligence of theirs, expose themselves to the immediate occasions of sin, in hopes that God will preserve them.

Such is the hope of many cold and negligent Christians, who relying upon a certain confidence of securing their salvation without much trouble, suffer themselves to sleep, employing remissly or seldom the means which God has been pleased to grant us, as most proper to preserve and encrease in us his grace, as prayer, the sacraments, and good works.

All these hopes are false and deceitful; and, like false lights, lead them into a precipice, instead of conducting them to salvation.

Hope, which is good and true, expects not only from God the performance of his promises, but that this shall be done in the manner God has promised. She hopes to be partaker of glory by serving him with fidelity, as he has promised heaven to those who shall serve him, be faithful in complying with his graces, and shall persevere therein to the end.

*True hope.*

She expects in this life grace, thereby to obtain glory; but endeavours at the same time not to put any obstacle on her side; she implores it with much fervour and humility, and as carefully complies with it. If in sin, she does penance without delay; yet never offends in hopes of doing penance; "but is fearful to commit a sin, which she does not know whether or no she shall ever be sufficiently able to deplore\*."

In a word, righteous hope walks always in the midst between confidence and fear: she trusts in God, and mistrusts herself. She hopes that God will not reject her, but she fears lest she should forsake her God: she hopes that God will assist her; but fears lest she herself prove unfaithful to his grace. And thus between this confidence and fear, humbling herself in the presence of God, she prays, she labours to secure her salvation by flying from sin, and by a due performance of good works.

In short, hope consists in, or is attended with these four acts.

*Acts comprised*

*in hope.*

1. A confidence of obtaining from the divine goodness everlasting life, with all the graces necessary for acquiring it.

2. A vehement desire of salvation: for the expectation, which we have, of any great good is apt to raise in us an ardent desire of it.

3. A

\* St. Greg. l. 33. in Tob. c. 15.



3. A fear to lose it by our fault, or any infidelity of ours; a fear which ought not to produce any disquiet in the soul, but the hatred of sin, which only can make us lose it.

4. A firm, and that an efficacious resolution to labour for salvation; a resolution which makes us act and employ the means necessary to obtain that end.

#### A R T I C L E IV.

##### *The effects of Hope.*

**W**HEN this great virtue is well imprinted in a soul, it there produces wonderful effects.

*First effect.* First, It makes her love and desire heaven, her dear country; it makes her sigh after her eternal happiness; it makes her fear, lest she be frustrated of it by her fault, and lose herself among the dangers of this mortal life, so full of rocks whereon salvation so often suffers shipwreck.

*Second effect.* Secondly, It makes her love the divine goodness, which has prepared so great blessings for her, and afforded the means to acquire them.

*Third effect.* Thirdly, It makes her condemn this life; it disengages her from the love of these goods and pleasures, making her look upon them as transitory things, which pass like a shadow, and yet which are not obtained but with much trouble, nor possessed without solicitude, nor lost without great grief. For this reason the just man accounts himself in this life no otherwise than as the traveller seeking his native country, knowing well, that *here we have no lasting city*, or abode, *but we seek one to come after this life* \*. And as it would be a folly in a traveller to set his affections upon a stately inn, and desire to make it his abode, so he, whose soul is full of the hopes of heaven, accounts it madness to pursue the goods of the earth, and in these trifles lose the opportunity of gaining heaven. St. Augustine observes that God by his wisdom has mingled afflictions and bitterness with all, even the most innocent goods of this life, so to disengage us from any affection to them: "Lest man, who is a traveller upon his way to heaven, taking his pleasure in this life, should love an inn better than his own house †."

*Fourth effect.* Fourthly, This hope makes the just man labour for his salvation, and becoming daily more

\* Heb. xiii. 14. † In Psal. xl.

more holy render himself worthy of his heavenly vocation. Every one that hath this hope in him (God), sanctifieth himself, as he also is holy\*. This hope gives him strength to conquer all difficulties, and wings to fly in the way of God's commandments. They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint†.

Fifthly, This same hope encourages us in temptations, and gives strength to encounter them. For what greater encouragement can there be on these occasions, than to know that God is with us? that he assists us to fight and overcome? and that he has prepared an eternal reward for those that conquer? He whose heart is replenished with this hope, does he not say with *David*, whensoever he is tempted? *I will fear no evils, for thou art with me, O Lord‡, The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear§. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident¶. O Lord, my God, in thee have I put my trust, save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me||. For this reason St. Paul calls hope the helmet of Christians. Having on for a helmet the hope of salvation\*\**: For as a head-piece it preserves us from the blows of the enemy, and the mortal wounds which he endeavours to give us.

*Fifth effect.*

In fine, hope is of infinite use in afflictions, of which this mortal life is full. Herein we find our refuge, our comfort, and our strength; when we consider with attention that these miseries cannot last always, that they must have an end, and will be followed by eternal joy, if we suffer them with necessary patience, and when we ponder well upon those excellent words of St. Paul, *Our present tribulation which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory††*.

*Sixth effect.*

It is then, after the example of this glorious Apostle, we rejoice and esteem ourselves happy in our afflictions, being assured that *tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not*; so as to permit our expectations to be disappointed‡‡. Wherefore the same Apostle says§§, that this holy hope is to Christians, that which the anchor is to a ship, which keeps it secure and steady amidst the tempestuous waves, and preserves it against the violence of winds. O

\* 1 Joh. iii. 3. † Isai. xl. 31. ‡ Psalm xxii. 4. § Psalm xxvi. 1.  
¶ Psalm xxvi. 3. || Psalm vii. 1. \*\* 1 Thes. v. 8. †† 2 Cor. iv. 17.  
‡‡ Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. §§ Heb. vi. 19.

O holy virtue, what blessings by thy means accrue to us, did we but know them! Endeavour, *Theotime*, to make thyself master of this great virtue, and to practise it with advantage to thy soul, to this effect peruse carefully what we say in short on this subject.

## A R T I C L E V.

*The Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist is of great use to fortify and augment the virtue of Hope.*

**G**OD endowed us with this virtue, when first he justified us in baptism, where we received sanctifying grace, with the gifts of faith, hope, and charity, and other Christian virtues.

It is encreased, like other virtues, by frequent acts, and by good works performed in the state of grace. Moreover it receives much strength and a wonderful encrease, by the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist; which may easily be evinced from the two things, which are the object of hope, viz. grace in this life, and in the next the glory both of body and soul.

As for glory, there is not any thing that confirms our hope of glory. *The Eucharist* firms us more in the hope of it than this divine sacrament, wherein we receive him in person, the possession of whom will compleat our glory and happiness.

For what greater security can we have of hereafter enjoying God himself than his bounty in communicating himself to us in this life? Could he afford us a more secure pledge than himself, and the assurance of his word, saying, *he that eateth this bread shall live for ever* \*?

And for the glory of the body, it is no less confirmed to us by this sacrament, the son of God having told us, *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day* †. Indeed the fathers of the church have often proved the resurrection from the Holy Eucharist. They assure us, that the life-giving flesh of *Jesus Christ*, as they frequently called it, has a particular virtue to raise from death to life those bodies it shall touch, as the bones of *Elizeus* had virtue by their touch to raise a dead man to life.

This truth is no less certain in respect of grace. For if we consider habitual or sanctifying grace, this divine sacrament is a powerful means to preserve it, and also to encrease it in

*It affords us hope of graces.*

\* Job. vi. 59.    † Joh. vi. 55.



the soul in a high degree, as often as we shall worthily receive it. And as for actual graces, which are so many helps which the divine goodness has bestowed upon us for our continuance in his friendship, and the pious motions he inspires us with to avoid evil, and employ ourselves totally in good, and the many protections which he affords us when our salvation is in danger, it is without doubt to this sacrament that we owe the greatest part thereof, as we have shown above in Part I. Chap. III. Art. II. Because this sacrament containing *Jesus Christ*, the author and source of all blessings, it must needs communicate them in abundance to those who worthily receive it. If by the other sacraments we are enriched with so many graces only by that virtue which the Son of God has annexed to them; how many more may we in reason expect from this, where the same Son of God is present, not only by his virtue, but in person?

God formerly gave *Manna* to the *Israelites*, and sustained them therewith for the space of forty years, the time of their pilgrimage towards the land of promise through the desert. This *Manna* fell every night, as the scripture remarks\*, with the dew from heaven, which bedewed the whole camp of *Israel*. With how much more reason may we affirm, that none ever receive this celestial *Manna*, the Holy Eucharist, (of which the other was only a figure) but finds his soul replenished with abundance of graces and divine blessings? If this heavenly bread is showered upon us for the nourishment of our souls, it certainly works the same in her, which wholesome food does in the body. Now corporal nutriment has these four effects: it preserves, increases, strengthens, and refreshes the body. It is necessary therefore that this spiritual food have the same operations in our souls, as we have already made out in the first part of this treatise, Chap. III. Art. II.

It was a figure of this truth, when the Prophet *Elias* †, flying the persecution of *Jezabel*, received from the hand of an angel a loaf of bread, which maintained him through his whole journey: and the scripture affirms ‡, that having eaten that bread, he received such strength, that, without any farther sustenance, he travelled full forty days, even to the mountain *Hareb*, which is interpreted the sight of God,

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\* Num. xi. 9. † 3 Kings xix. ‡ Ver. 3



## A R T I C L E VI.

*The practice of Hope is a good disposition to communicate well.*

**I**F the blessed sacrament confirms in us the virtue of hope, in order to communicate well we must before-hand exercise the acts of, and have our hearts replenished with this said virtue of hope: because as heat is natural to fire, and fire does not communicate its effects but to the subject which is already hot; it is necessary that the same heat should be introduced into that matter where one would have the fire to act: for the natural qualities of any thing whatever serve as dispositions to give it both a being and action. Since therefore the Holy Eucharist is a sacrament, which so powerfully revives our hope, to receive this sacrament with advantage, it is necessary that we be full of this virtue, and stir up ourselves the most we can to it, when we approach this holy table.

And truly if we consider the particular acts of which this virtue is composed, we shall find, that they are the most usual dispositions to communion: we have marked them out above in Art. III. an expectation of eternal life; a desire of obtaining it; a fear of losing it by any sin; and a resolution of effectually labouring for it.

## A R T I C L E VII.

*Acts of Hope for Communion.*

**T**HESE acts are the four of which we have already spoken, to which we must join a sorrow for sin, which has set us at so great a distance from the divine grace, and from eternal glory, and prayer, by which we beg of God both grace and glory. One may reap much fruit from the practice of these pious acts before and after communion.

*An Act of Hope before Communion.*

**A**Ddressing your thoughts and heart to our Lord, who is present in the sacred host, acknowledge that he is your only hope, and that it is from him alone you expect all blessings, both of grace and glory.

O Jesus, my Saviour and my God, I adore thee in this sacred host, where thou art present, to be to me a Saviour. Thou art my only hope, it is from thee alone I expect all my happiness, whether in this life or the next, saying with David: *And now what is my hope, is it not the Lord? And my substance, is with thee.*

Or,

• Psalm xxxviii. 8.

Or, *My hope, O Lord, from my youth* \*. I hope that thou wilt by thy grace conduct me safe in this, and replenish me with glory in the next. What blessings may not I expect from thy hands in this blessed state; since thy bounty has vouchsafed so liberally to bestow thyself upon me in this unhappy vale of tears? Thou givest me hopes of possessing thee one day face to face; since thou hast been so good as to give thyself to me in the blessed sacrament.

O inestimable pledge of my future felicity, when shall that happy hour come that I shall see thee face to face, with all the blessings thou hast prepared for those that serve thee? O my God, how lovely are those mansions where thou art clearly seen! My soul sighs after them. My heart and my very flesh leap for joy, in the hopes I shall once possess the living God.

I am fixed in my hope, and I know that there is not any thing, except my sins, which can ever frustrate my desires. Wherefore I here detest them all from the bottom of my heart. Prostrate in thy presence, O my God, with a contrite and humble heart I beg pardon; and for the future I am resolved to fly sin, more than death itself.

It is in this pious confidence and hope that I approach at present to this holy communion, there to receive thee hidden under the sacramental species, and to taste before hand these infinite blessings which thou hast prepared for me in everlasting life, where I shall be so happy as to see thee as thou art in thyself. O my God, exclude me not from this holy table, which thou hast prepared for me in this mortal life, to the end I may deserve to be admitted to that other, which thou hast appointed in everlasting life to feast thy faithful servants. It is true, my sins have made me unworthy of either of them: yet I hope in thy mercy, which has been pleased to pardon them, and which will confirm that pardon by strengthening the resolution I have conceived of being faithful to thee. Come then, O divine Saviour, enter and take possession of me; speak to my soul a word of comfort †, tell her, that thou art her strength, her salvation, and her sovereign good. Tell her, as once thou didst *Abraham*: *Fear not, I am thy protector*, amidst the greatest dangers of this life: I am thy *exceeding great reward*, an infinite and incomprehensible recompence in the next ‡. Grant I beseech thee, that I may rightly understand these important truths; and that this may be the fruit of the communion, which I am about to receive.

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\* Psalm lxx. 5. † Psalm xxxiv. 3. ‡ Gen. xv. 1.

When you have pondered well upon these holy thoughts, approach to the sacred table, with an earnest desire of possessing your God, and in hopes of receiving in this communion an abundant supply of graces which may make him abide in you, and you in him.

*After Communion.*

**A**S soon as you are retired from the holy table, adore with all humility our Lord, whom you have received: return him innumerable thanks for the infinite favour he has done you in coming to you; after this employ yourself in the practice of these three acts of the virtue of hope.

An earnest desire of eternal salvation.

A strong resolution to labour in attaining it. And

Prayer to implore that grace at the hands of God, and the necessary means of securing your salvation.

First then, addressing your thoughts to our Lord, whom you have received, represent to yourself that you possess him, who constitutes the happiness of the saints, and *on whom the Angels desire to look*\*. In this belief speak to him from your heart as follows.

I adore thee, O infinite greatness, O divine majesty, who fillest both heaven and earth, and art adored in heaven by all the blessed Angels and saints, who incessantly praise and cry out before thee: *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth*†: how is it possible, O my God, that thou shouldst stoop so low as to descend to me, and to enclose thyself within me? *Is it credible then, that God should dwell with men on the earth? If heaven, and the heavens of heavens do not contain thee, how much less this house which I have built*‡? But thy goodness, O God, knows how to humble itself when it pleases thee. Thou knowest well how to conceal the splendour of thy glory, to communicate thyself more freely to us. This thou didst in thy adorable incarnation, in which thou madest thyself like to us to attract our love: and this method thou holdest on in this mystery, where thou bestowest thyself upon us for our food and nourishment, that thou mayst more closely unite thyself to us, and make us aspire to that celestial banquet, which thou hast prepared for all the blessed in heaven, whom thou perpetually replenishest with thy divine presence.

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\* 1 Pet. i. 12.

† Isa. vi. 3.

‡ 2 Chron. vi. 18.



O my God, grant me grace that I may daily more and more aspire to this eternal banquet, that the desire of enjoying it may make me slight all the goods and pleasures of this mortal life, and labour continually to render myself worthy of it, and to arrive thereat.

*Desire of salvation.*

This is my resolution, which at present I make before thee; I resolve to renounce all my irregular affections, and whatever may too much incline me to the vain and deceitful goods of this life. I know they are apt to endanger the loss of everlasting happiness. I will therefore withdraw my heart from them, that I may love nothing but thee alone, and place my whole trust in thee, as David did. *It is good for me to stick close to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God\*.* I firmly resolve to watch over all my actions, to fly from sin, and avoid whatsoever may displease thee. And as the same Psalmist expresseth himself, *I shall be spotless with him: and shall keep myself from my iniquity†.* I will labour to work out my salvation, by keeping thy holy commandments. This I protest before thee, O my God; and I hope I shall be faithful to thee. *I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice‡.*

*Resolution.*

But I am not able to perform this without the assistance of thy grace, wherefore I most humbly demand it of thee: O God save me, *Lead me into the path of thy commandments, for this same I have desired: incline my heart,* and make me love thy divine truths, and not the goods of this world §. *Divert my eyes that they may not see,* that is, be fixed on, vanity: *enliven and strengthen me in thy way,* that is, in the holy path of virtue. Grant that I may find nothing amiable but thee alone: assist my weakness that I may be able to advance towards thee ¶. *Draw me to thee, O divine Jesus!* being thus attracted *we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments,* that is, of thy divine virtues, by an holy imitation of them, and by following thee even as far as heaven, where thou livest and reignest for all eternity.

*Prayer.*

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\* Psalm lxxii. 28. † Psalm xvii. 24. ‡ Psalm cxviii. 106. § Psalm xxxv. ¶ Cant. i. 4.



## C H A P. III.

*Of Charity, the third disposition for the worthy receiving of the blessed Sacrament.*

## A R T I C L E I.

*How necessary Charity is, to communicate well.*

*Charity is a necessary disposition for communion.*

**T**HIS is the third disposition for a good communion, and no less necessary than the two former: yea, without it, those two great virtues would not at all conduce, or dispose the soul for the worthy receiving of *Jesur Christ*. Although your faith were as great as that of the Apostles, and your hope equalled that of the Prophets, if you have not charity, you are not in proper dispositions for entertaining him, who is charity itself, and who cannot dwell with him who has not charity.

*If I should have all faith, says St. Paul, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing\**. He even says: *And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing, to make these great acts of faith and hope†*. If then these two virtues without charity are useless in respect of salvation, it is certain that they are not sufficient dispositions to receive into our breast the author of salvation.

The Son of God entering into us by the *First reason*. holy Communion, expects to find there a dwelling-place prepared and worthy of him, which cannot be except charity be there. "For faith is the foundation of the house of God in our soul: by hope the walls are raised; but charity is the roof and perfection of the work‡." *Solomon*, building a temple for God, was not satisfied to lay the groundwork upon a mountain, and build it with stones of great value; but moreover he covered that part of the temple, where the ark of the testament was to be placed, *with most pure gold§*. The Holy Ghost teaching us by this figure, that the house of God ought to be adorned with the most refined gold of charity, without which it cannot be an habitation pleasing to him.

In

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 2. † Ver. 3. ‡ St. Augustine. § 3 Kings vi. 20.

In this divine sacrament we receive the bread of life, by which celestial food our soul is nourished and preserved in the life of grace: it must then find the soul alive, for what is dead is incapable of nourishment. Now the life of the soul is charity. *He that loveth not abideth in death\*.*

*Second reason.*

This celestial bread is the bread of the children of God; it is made for them. It is then an horrible sacrilege for any one to receive it who is not of that number, as we have said above, Part I. Chap. III. Art. IV. Now what is it that makes men the children of God? and by what are they distinguished from the children of the Devil? St. *Augustine* says†, that it is charity, and nothing else. Baptism, and other marks of Christianity do not sufficiently distinguish betwixt the one and the other; charity alone is the only distinctive sign betwixt them. He who loves God is the child of God; he who loves him not, is the child of the Devil.

*Third reason.*

In fine, it is a heavenly banquet, where our Lord gives himself for our food, and to which he invites us with a love great beyond all compare; but he invites only his friends. *Eat*, says he, *O friends, and drink‡*. Now he is not a friend of *Jesus Christ*, who does not love him, who does not comply with his will in all things. *If you love me*, says he, *keep my commandments§*. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them: he it is that loveth me¶*.

*Fourth reason.*

It is his will that every one should come to this banquet with the preparation it deserves; especially that we bring with us the nuptial garment. If he find here any one so rash as to present himself without this ornament, he rejects him as unworthy. Now this robe is nothing else but that of charity, which renders our soul acceptable to God, and worthy to approach him. *In golden borders, clothed round about with varieties||*. In a word, to communicate as we ought, we must be in the state of grace, which without charity is impossible; and this is the reason why we cannot communicate worthily without this queen of virtues.

*Fifth reason.*

\* 1 Joh. iii. 14. † Tract. 5, in Epist. 1 Joan. ‡ Cant. v. i. § John xiv. 15. ¶ John xiv. 21. || Ps. xlv. 14, 15.

## A R T I C L E II.

*We must carefully distinguish false Charity from true.*

**N**O one questions the foregoing truth, all agreeing, that to receive worthily there must of necessity be the love of God in our heart, since he has bestowed himself upon us with such an admirable love. But all do not agree in the nature and quality of this love, there being many who judge of it rather according to their own inclinations, than by the rules of truth.

None but a madman or a villain would refuse to love God, whom he knows to be the author of all good, or would not at least think he loves him; but there are infinite numbers of people who deceive themselves in this their supposition, and have only a false and imaginary love of God, whilst they think they truly love him.

Such is their charity who say they love God, and yet hate their neighbour; or who will not pardon an injury, or be reconciled to their enemy; for, *If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar\**.

Such is their charity who say they love God, yet retain ill-gotten goods, which they will not restore; who continue in an evil habit of mortal sin, without having a firm purpose of amendment; and their's, who neglect to satisfy the obligations of their state: in a word, all their's who fail in the observance of God's commandments in any thing whatever. This being an undoubted maxim, that the true and only mark of the love of God is to keep his commandments. *If any one love me, says our Lord, he will keep my word†, that is, my commandments; he that loveth me not, keepeth not my words‡. He that saith he knoweth him, that is, loves God; and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him§.*

All these sorts of charity are false and deceitful; those who love God in this manner do not love him at all; and those who communicate with this kind of love are unworthy communicants.

The true love of God makes us observe his commandments in all things, makes us fearful of incurring his displeasure by any mortal sin, and makes us prefer his friendship before whatever is most dear

\* 1 Joh. iv. 20. † Joh. xiv. 23. ‡ Ibid. § 1 Joh. ii. 4.



to us, as pleasures, estate, honour, and life itself; being ready to lose all these things rather than preserve them by offending God.

Behold, *Theotime*, what the love of God is, without which it is impossible to be in the state of grace, or communicate worthily; and that you may understand it better, read what follows.

A R T I C L E III.

*What true charity is.*

**I**T is a virtue infused or given by God, which makes us love him above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves. *Charity defined.*

This definition is taken from the commandment which God has given us to love him. *Charity explained.*

*Thou shalt love, says he, the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself\*.* These words, *with thy whole heart*, signify what we have already said, that we must love God above all things, and that our heart ought to be wholly his; loving nothing either equally with him, or more than him, but less than him, and only in order to his service.

This greater love does not consist in having a more vehement, a more tender, and a more affective love for God than for any other thing, although this were to be wished, but in this, that we esteem God more than all the things of this world, and that in our heart and in effect we prefer his friendship before all other goods, and whatever we love: so that we resolve to abandon and lose them all, rather than be deprived of the grace of God.

This preference and this resolution are so necessarily required in the love of God, that they are the only distinguishing mark it has, and without which it cannot subsist: so that in the moment in which any one willingly and in effect breaks this resolution, he loses the love of God. However, to make this preference and resolution, we need not represent in particular all the things before which we ought to prefer the love of God; this is neither necessary nor always expedient: what is required is a general, but steady resolution never to lose the grace of God for any thing of the world, nor to do any thing whereby we may mortally offend him.

This resolution is the fruit and offspring of the virtue of charity, which is that divine quality which is poured abroad in our hearts by

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\* Luke x. 27.



*the Holy Ghost who is given to us* \*. It continues with us as long as we hold this resolution; but as soon as we come to lose it by any either action or desire contrary to it, we are immediately deprived of this holy charity, which is the queen and mother of all other virtues, and without which all others avail nothing to salvation.

I do not here examine the motives which ought to induce us to the love of God, *viz.* whether it be the reward we expect from him, or the friendship and benevolence due to him: charity unites these two; and although it be not built or grounded upon the reward, yet it does not exclude it: but the soul which is endowed with charity, loving God for himself, expects at his hands the reward of that love, which is himself. She loves God because of the recompence, yet is far from loving him merely and only for the sake of this recompence; for she would love him, although she looked for nothing from him. "We never love God without a reward, although we ought to love him without minding the reward: for though true charity be never fruitless, yet it is not mercenary; she seeks not her own interest. It is an affection of the soul, not a contract. It neither gains, nor is gained by bargaining. It is a voluntary affection, and makes one give himself freely to his God. True love is satisfied with itself, its reward is its beloved †."

We have already spoken of this virtue in other places, as Vol. I. Part IV. Chap. III. and XVI. and Vol. II. in the examen upon the first commandment: wherefore I shall only add here what concerns it in relation to the sacrament of the eucharist, and in as much as it regards holy communion.

#### A R T I C L E IV.

##### *Of the motives of the love of God.*

"THE reason of loving God is God himself ‡; and therefore when any one asks, why we ought to love God? one cannot answer better than by saying, because he is God,

But as God contains in himself an infinity of perfections and qualities, which render him infinitely amiable, this general reason of loving God, because he is God, is divided into many particular motives, which are so many several obligations to love that infinite goodness which can never be sufficiently loved,

Thus

\* Rom. v. 4. † St. Bernard de diligendo Deo. ‡ Idem, ibidem.

Thus when I consider, that God is great and perfect in himself, and that he encircles within himself all possible perfections, all power, goodness, wisdom, justice, I find reason to love him above all other things; because there is nothing among creatures, which is so amiable as he; and he deserves to be beloved, although by an impossible supposition, he should never have done us any good.

If I descend to the benefits which he has bestowed upon us, and consider him as Creator of heaven and earth, and of all those excellent works which he has made for our sake, I find reason to love him above all things: for how can I but love so great a bounty, which has wrought such wonders for us? "Heaven and earth, and all things in them tell me on every side to love thee \*.

If I reflect upon myself, I acknowledge I am the work of that immense goodness, which out of nothing has made me what I am, and cannot refrain from loving him, if I love myself, and own myself for what I am, viz. the workmanship of God. "God deserves to be loved for his own sake, even by the very infidel, who although he be ignorant of Jesus Christ, yet he knows himself; therefore even the infidel is inexcusable, if he do not love his Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength. A certain innate or natural equity, not unknown to reason, cries out aloud to him from within, that he ought to love him with all his power, from whom he cannot but know, that he has received all whatsoever he has †."

If I consider our redemption, I there find an abyss of love, an inexhaustible fountain, from whence motives to love that great and singular goodness, which has delivered me from eternal ruin, continually flow. "If I owe my whole self to God for having created me, how much more do I owe him for having redeemed me, and in such a manner? for I was not so easily redeemed, as I was created. At my creation it was said of me, as well as of all other things, *He spake, and they were made* ‡. To create me cost him but one word: but he who made me by speaking, and that only once, when he redeemed me, spoke much, he wrought wonders, and suffered much hardship and many indignities. In the first work he gave me my self, or what I am;

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" in

\* St. Aug. l. 10. Conf. c. 6. † St. Bern. l. 1. de dilig. Deo. ‡ Psalm cxlviii. 5.

"in the second he gave himself, and giving himself for me, he restored me to myself. What return shall or can I make to God for himself? I owe myself entirely to him in acknowledgment for my creation, and what remains for me to give for my redemption? Although I could repay myself a thousand times, what am I in comparison to my Lord\*?"

## A R T I C L E V.

*Of the particular motives of the love of God, drawn from the Blessed Sacrament.*

**I**T should seem that love is not able to advance farther than that of our Lord has done, and that the highest pitch to which it could possibly arrive were to die for us, according to those words of our Lord: *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends*†. But the divine love knows no bounds, it passes beyond death; and as it is ingenious and omnipotent, it finds out innumerable ways to make its greatness and excess appear.

The charity of *Jesus Christ* was not content to lay down his life for our salvation, to reconcile us to God by his death, even when we were his enemies‡, or to love us first, "He being so great, to love so much and of his pure mercy, such and so contemptible persons§;" that is, with such an excess of love, and such a debasement of his greatness, to love to such a degree us wretched creatures, laden with sins and all miseries, and this of his pure mercy, without any interest of his side, but merely upon the consideration of our good.

This excess of love would not satisfy his bounty; he has even found out the means of never departing from those whom he has loved so far as to die for them; he has contrived to remain with us, though absent from us; and having withdrawn from us his visible presence, he has nevertheless found out a way how we may still enjoy him. He has given us his flesh for meat, and his blood for drink; he has shut them up under the figure of bread and wine, that we might the more commodiously receive them; and, by means of this divine invention, he enters into and takes possession of us, he sanctifies our soul and body, he enlivens us with his grace, he cures our interior maladies, he strengthens our weakness; in a word, *He abideth in us and we in him*¶.

O skil-

\* St. Bern. l. de dilig. Deo. † Joh. xv. 13. ‡ Rom. v. 10. § Ibid. ¶ Joh. vi. 57.



O skilful and ingenious love! O admirable invention, peculiar to God alone! Here we may affirm with truth what the prophet *Isaiah* said: *Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel*.\*.

In this sacrament of the eucharist God is truly hidden, because he has herein invented a way to conceal the grandeur of his Majesty, that so we might more easily approach him. And it is in this holy sacrament that we may say with *David*: *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast bidden for them that fear thee! Which thou hast wrought for them that hope in thee, in the sight of the sons of men†.*

What return can we make to God for so extraordinary and so incomprehensible a blessing? For if we do not know how sufficiently to acknowledge the benefit of our creation, much less are we able to make any return for that of our redemption; how then can we testify our gratitude for this third effect, and this utmost excess of the divine goodness, wherein he not only gives himself for us, but to us, that we may truly take possession of him? "What return shall I make to God in exchange for himself? "although I should give myself to him a thousand times, what am I, when compared with my God‡?"

True it is, *Theotime*, that we cannot return to God any thing worthy of him, in acknowledgment of the rich present he has made us of himself: yet at least we may afford him our love and affection, as far as we are able, saying with *St. Bernard*: "I will love thee, O my God, my helper, for the offering thou hast made me of thyself, and that to the utmost of my power. It is true, it can never be equal: yet it shall not be inferior to the power, with which thy holy grace shall endow me§."

## ARTICLE VI.

*Of acts of charity before Communion.*

**W**HEN we expect a person of great quality, we do three things. 1. We earnestly desire his coming. 2. We take all possible care to have all things in readiness for his kind reception, as lodging, conversation, banquets, and presents. 3. We go to meet him. And it is but just that you perform these things in regard of *Jesus Christ*, whom you expect.

1. With

\* *Isai.* xlv. 15. † *Pl.* xxx. 20 ‡ *St. Bern.* l. de dilig. Deo. § *Ibid.*



1. With from your heart for his dear presence, making use of those words of *David*: *As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after thee, O God*\*. O my God, my soul sighs after thee, and languishes away with desires to possess thee. Come, O my Lord, make haste, pardon me once more my sins, and make me worthy of the favour which thou art about to bestow upon me.

2. Make all things ready to receive him; and although your soul be already disposed by confession, see however, and examine again whether there remain any thing that may be displeasing in the eyes of *Jesus Christ*, some secret sin, some irregular inclinations, as a lie, an aversion against your neighbour, or any sinful or dangerous affection. Leave not the least of all these things in your heart, but root them out by contrition and a fixed and steady resolution to amend your life. Think of the conversation with which you design to entertain him, as soon as you have received him. The most acceptable is that which consists of acts of faith, hope, and charity: these are the most agreeable offering you can possibly make him. Prepare yourself to present him your heart to love him, and yourself to serve him with all fidelity.

3. Go forth to meet him, and to invite him into your house by good thoughts and holy affections, *let my beloved come into his garden*†. O Jesus, come into my soul, as into a garden, which much delights thee. Make her worthy to receive thee, vouchsafe to take away from her whatever may be offensive to thee: adorn her with the flowers which best please thee, that is, with purity and humility. Come, O Saviour of my soul; come and save me by thy grace, and deliver me from those enemies, who design my eternal ruin.

*Of Acts of Charity after Communion.*

**P**ERFORM that towards *Jesus Christ* which we are wont to do, when a person of quality, whom we have long expected is arrived. After the first meeting and salutation, we conduct him to the apartment prepared for him, and there we perform these four things.

1. We give some signal testimonies of our respect, friendship, and acknowledgment for the honour we receive by his presence.
2. We offer him the best things we have, and such as may be most pleasing to him.
3. If we have need of his assistance, we beg

\* Ps. xli. 1. † Cantic. v. 1.

beg such things as we want. In fine, when he returns we give him thanks, acknowledging the honour of the visit, we renew and repeat to him our protestations of fidelity, friendship, and service. Behold how you are to behave towards *Jesus Christ*, immediately after communion.

As soon therefore as you have received the sacred host with great faith, and a profound humility, adore our Lord who is within you. Then departing modestly from the holy table, withdraw yourself into some convenient place; and employ yourself as follows.

Conduct our Lord, not into your body, since he is there already, but into the place of your soul wherein he most delights, that is, into your heart and affection; that is to say, fix your thoughts upon him, and make acts of adoration, love, and gratitude; consecrate to his divine service your soul and body, and present him your petitions.

O my God and my Saviour *Jesus Christ*, I adore thee from the bottom of my heart; I firmly believe that I now possess thy body, a living body, and therefore, by a necessary consequence, thy blood also and thy soul; as likewise thy divinity, which was always inseparably united to thy humility. I acknowledge that thou art in me all these ways. O greatness of God, is it possible that thou shouldst humble thyself so low? O goodness, how immense art thou thus to remain with us!

Thou dost not only come to us, but thou bestowest thyself upon us for food and nourishment: and to whom? to a poor and wretched servant as I am: a Lord to his slave: God to his creature: *Jesus Christ* to a sinner. Although I had nothing mean but my condition, I should be unworthy to receive thee; but I am become still more undeserving by my sins, and yet thou hast the goodness, not only to say to me as *David* said to *Miphiboseph*, *thou shalt eat bread at my table*\*: but also thou thyself art my food and nourishment. O divine goodness! how have I deserved so great a favour; *who am I thy servant that thou shouldst look upon such a dog as I am?*

Ponder well upon these words, and consider what you were before by sin; less in the sight of God, than a dead dog in respect of his master: and that you are now by his grace and favour restored to the number of the children of God, seated at his table, and nourished with his body and blood. Next proceed to the acts of love and acknowledgment.

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\* 2 Kings ix. 7.

*Acts of love towards Jesus Christ.*

**O** My God, what return shall I make for this so signal a favour, and what shall I do to acknowledge it? Is it possible that I should not continually love thee, after this excess of love which thou hast shewn me? Thou hast loved me to that degree, as to lay down thy life for my sake, and shall not I make this return at least, as only to live for thee? Thou hast communicated thyself at present wholly to me, and shall not I from henceforth be wholly thine? O my God, permit me not to be so ungrateful and so insensible of this thy love and my own salvation. I am fully resolved by thy holy grace, that I will be faithful to thee, and never depart from thee by any disobedience to thy law. I will never forget thy bounty, nor the favour thou hast done me in admitting me to partake of thy mercy. I will love thee with all my heart. O my God, my strength, my support, my refuge, and my deliverer. Thou art my God and my all. What is there either in heaven or on earth I should love besides thee? Thou art the God of my heart, the inheritance and holy happiness I pretend to; I have made choice of thee, and nothing shall prevail on me, to make me change.

*An Offering to Jesus Christ.*

**W**HAT shall I give thee, O my Saviour, as an earnest of that love which I have here now engaged to thee? I have nothing worthy of thee; and if I had, I have nothing but what is thine on several accounts; but such is thy goodness, thou art willing to accept from us what is thy own already. Wherefore behold I here offer myself to thee, my body and soul, which are now sanctified by the honour of thy divine presence: I offer them both to thee, since at present thou hast chosen them to be thy temple: my body to be employed in thy service, and never more to be an instrument of sin; my soul to know thee, to love thee, and evermore to be faithful to thee. Bless O Lord, the present I here make thee: sanctify them both, since they have served thee for a temple. Permit not that my body be any more defiled with sensual delights, nor my soul by a will to commit any mortal sin. For my part I here resolve to serve thee with body and soul; I will take pains to correct their evil inclinations; I will fight against myself, renounce my wonted pleasures, my delights, my passions, my concupiscence, my anger, my pride, my ambition, my own self love, and lastly, whatever may offend thee my God.

*A Prayer*



*A prayer to Jesus Christ.*

**P**RESERVE in my soul, O my God, this holy resolution thou hast here given me, and grant me grace faithfully to put it in execution: I can do nothing of myself, and without thy assistance: I therefore beg it of thee with all my heart, that I may conquer all the difficulties I shall meet with in the way of my salvation. Look upon me with the eyes of mercy, have compassion on my weakness, and strengthen me daily with thy grace.

When you have finished all these acts, you may make use of the prayers in your manual after communion, or other vocal prayers, according as your devotion shall dictate to you: and I say the same also of the prayers which those books contain as a preparation to communion. But all this is to be understood, provided still that you apply your chief endeavours to the practice of the acts of the precedent virtues.

## A R T I C L E VII.

*Advice concerning the foregoing Forms of Faith, Hope, and Charity.*

**T**HERE are some directions to be observed concerning the practice, which we have given you, of these three virtues in order to communion.

The first is, that it is not necessary to employ them all every time we communicate, because they may be too long: but it is enough that we insist particularly upon the practice of some one of the three, and to direct the principal fruit of the communion to that end. Thus you may choose for one communion the practice of faith, for the next, that of hope, and charity for the third: yet never omitting some act of each of the other virtues, when one of the three is your principal exercise.

Secondly, that you may reap the benefit of any of these virtues, you must prepare yourself before-hand, by reading the forms which we have given thereof. You must read that which you intend to practise; and take notice of the acts, and endeavour to understand them well, and make them your own.

Thirdly, when the time of communion shall be at hand, you must practise these acts as you read them here. But remember that your heart go along with your words. To this end you must read them leisurely, repeat and ruminate upon them within yourself, insisting upon those which move you most. They are for the most part words taken out of holy writ, collected on purpose that  
you



you may learn them with more ease, and that they may make the deeper impression.

To conclude and reap the benefit of the practice of these three virtues, employ some part of the day of your communion in pondering upon what you have practised in the morning; to this end read the whole chapter which concerns that virtue, which may serve for a spiritual lesson on the day of your communion.

## A R T I C L E VIII.

### *Of Prayer to the Blessed Virgin before and after Communion.*

**I** Recommend to you most earnestly, dear *Theotime*, not to forget to pray to the Blessed Virgin before and after communion.

Before communion, that you may obtain, by her intercession, the grace to communicate worthily, conceiving, as she did, the Son of God in your heart before you receive him into your body. And that you may be filled with those holy dispositions, whereby she merited to receive the Son of God himself into her womb, particularly with those of *purity* and *humility*, which were the two virtues by which she attracted to her the Son of God: "She pleased him by her virginity, and conceived him by her humility\*."

After communion pray to her, that by her intercession you may obtain grace to retain spiritually in your soul her Son *Jesus Christ*, whom you have corporally received, as she herself after she had conceived and brought him into the world, preserved him always in her heart, by means of that love which kept her soul continually fixed upon her dearly beloved Son: a love whereby she enjoyed a greater happiness, than she did by being chosen the mother of God. "The mother of God was truly happy upon this account, that she became his mother in the incarnation, and conceived him in her body; but without a doubt she was much more happy, because she preserved him perpetually in her heart by love†."

Form in your understanding a right notion of this happiness, and pray to the Blessed Virgin to obtain of her dear Son that he remain for ever with you.

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\* St. Bernard, † Ven. Bede hom. in Lucam.

## ARTICLE IX.

*How we ought to spend the Day of our Communion.*

**I**T is an advice of very great consequence, to spend all that day in piety and devotion, wherein you have performed so sacred an action; and to honour that day by the exercise of good works, upon which God has been pleased to sanctify you by his presence. To spend it otherwise is to fail in your respect to *Jesus Christ*; and it happens but too often, that, by this neglect of our duty we lose the greater part of the fruit, which otherwise we might reap from the holy communion.

What then you are to do, *Theotime*, on that day, is frequently to call to mind, and seriously to reflect upon the honour you have received, and which it is out of your power sufficiently to esteem.

Secondly, not to distract your mind, either with vain diversions, or with unprofitable and frivolous discourse: but to be more serious, modest, and reserved in all the actions of that day, remembering what honour has been done you, when you were chosen to be the temple of *Jesus Christ*.

Thirdly, employ all that day in good works, as far as you are able: the rest of the morning in divine service, or reading some book of piety. After dinner in hearing the word of God, assisting at even-song; and the remainder of the day in discourse with good and virtuous persons.

At night in your prayers be not unmindful to give God thanks for your communion, and all the favours which he has bestowed upon you. Beseech him most earnestly that he will give you grace to benefit yourself thereby the next day, and the remainder of your life, and to put in execution all the resolutions you have made upon this occasion.

But for the better compliance with these holy resolutions, remember that you renew them every day in your morning prayers, even to the day of your following communion; and at night in your examen of conscience see and consider well whether you have faithfully fulfilled them, or whether you have broken your promise, and in what; that so you may set yourself again in the right way of the service of God.

## A R T I C L E X.

*Of frequent Communion.*

Nothing now remains, but to exhort you to communicate often, dear *Theotime*, and to secure the great advantages which God presents you with in this divine sacrament. It is in reality a great benefit to have communicated in the manner we have here pointed out; but if after this, one abstain a long time from it, he runs the danger of losing the fruit of his foregoing communion by relapsing into sin, and the disorders of his former life.

There is a certain proportion betwixt spiritual and corporal nourishment. This requires we should take it as often as the necessity of our body shall require; and we need it according as the natural heat consumes our substance, and whatever contributes to its support. The same must be said of spiritual food, which serves to repair the forces of the soul, continually diminished and weakened by concupiscence, and all the passions with which it is assaulted. If these forces are not frequently recruited, the life of grace is by degrees much weakened, and in the end entirely lost. Now what serves to repair them is the holy Eucharist, which renews our strength, and restores our soul to her former vigour, weakening concupiscence, diminishing our passions, preserving her from mortal, nay even from venial sins, as we have already said.

After this, is there any necessity of other motives to persuade either you or any Christian, to frequent communion? Certainly those who are willing to do what is pleasing in the sight of God, and continue in his grace, have need of none. And as I suppose you are one of that number, I exhort you by the charity of *Jesus Christ*, and by the excess of love which he shewed us, in bestowing himself upon us in this adorable mystery of our salvation, that you frequently approach to him in this divine sacrament, to the end that he may remain in you and you in him, as he himself has promised.

Consider that your soul is always sick, and that its distempers, if neglected, may bring you to eternal death. Come then to this great physician, who alone is able to cure you, and to preserve you from death, by this bread which he has given: *The bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world* \*.

Consider his earnest desire of relieving you in all your wants, and the ardent love with which he presses you to come to him.

*Come*



*Come to me, all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you: and you shall find rest to your souls* \*. They who are not won with this endearing invitation, shew themselves as much insensible to the love which *Jesus Christ* has testified for them, as they are enemies to their own salvation? Is it possible that you should be one of these? Look to it, for if you be, you are not of the number of the children of God: for children listen and attend to the voice of their father, readily come to him, and esteem themselves honoured by his company, and especially by being admitted to his table.

What a shame is it then for Christians so to neglect such a treasure, which is so nigh at hand! to be at the very source of divine graces, and not to benefit themselves thereby! to remain in the death of sin, when the fountain of life is at their disposal! *Why will you die, O house of Israel* †? O Christians, among whom God has chosen his habitation upon earth, why do you suffer yourselves thus to die, having the author of life so near you, who invites you to come, and threatens you if you do not accept his invitation? Crying out to you in a loud voice, *Except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you* ‡. Adding: *he that eateth me the same also shall live by me* §. After such strong assurances, what excuse can we alledge before the divine tribunal at the day of judgment for keeping ourselves at such a distance from the fountain of life, and preferring the state of death, and this because we are unwilling to partake of this living and life-giving bread?

Call to mind the feast in the parable ||, where *Frivolous excuses*. the master of the house shewed so much anger and indignation against those who refused to come, after they had been so solemnly invited. They excused themselves the best they could, some on account of their affairs, others their pleasures; one said, he was obliged to go to his country house; another, that he went to try the oxen he had bought; and the third, that he was taken up about his marriage; but not any of these excuses were admitted, they were all rejected as frivolous pleas, and they who made them were all judged unworthy of being ever admitted to that banquet. This is the method which God will use towards Christians who refrain from the sacraments, upon these vain pretences which they usually frame to themselves; for all their excuses will be condemned and rejected.

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\* Mat. xi. 28, 29. † Ezech. xxxiii. 11. ‡ Joh. vi. 54. § Joh. vi. 58.  
|| Luke xiv.



To those who excuse themselves on account of affairs and employments of the world it will be answered, that there is no concern of such importance as that of their salvation, which therefore they ought to prefer before all other things. And they will be reproached for having preferred their temporal concerns before their eternal happiness, and made more account of this world, than of the grace of God.

To those who excuse themselves with the indispositions of their soul, saying, that they have not that virtue which is required for frequent communion, one may reply, that their excuse is but too true, yet it is a very bad one; for it is their duty so to live, that they may communicate frequently, and to use their utmost endeavours to render themselves worthy.

Lastly, we shall find that there is no other cause why people communicate but seldom, besides their sloth, their indevotion, and fear, lest, if they should frequent the sacraments, they would henceforth be obliged to live holily; and in short, an unwillingness to amend their lives, and a desire to remain in their sins, and to indulge their pleasures, their covetousness, ambition, and other passions.

Avoid this great misfortune, this fault so common among Christians, who slight in this manner their salvation, and the great advantages which by the goodness and mercy of God are offered them. Learn in time to set a great value on them, and to avail yourself of them, approaching frequently to these divine mysteries instituted by God, as the means of your salvation.

Begin this method from your youth, and continue it thenceforward all your life, that you may perform it better and better, the oftener you approach to the holy table.

## A R T I C L E X.

*When and how often we ought to communicate.*

*Communicate once  
in a month.*

**T**HE time which you ought most commonly to observe in your communion, is that of every month; so that you should not exceed that space without affording this divine nourishment of the holy Eucharist to your soul.

It is difficult to abstain so long without finding the want of this help to resist the temptations of your spiritual enemies, and to repress the passions which spring from your age. You have need of strength, whereby you may be able to withstand the Devil, as also of a good preservative against yourself; the one and the other you

you will find in the holy communion. Wherefore it is fit that you have recourse to it, as the wants of your soul shall require.

Beside, it is necessary that you grow up and encrease in the fear of God, and in all Christian virtues, faith, hope, charity, humility, temperance, modesty, and the rest; which you can never do, if you communicate but seldom.

Take this then for a general rule, to communicate once a month, and oftener in either *Of ten or some occasions.* of these cases:

First, when there happens any solemn feast, as of our Lord, or of the blessed Virgin, which you should never let pass without receiving the blessed sacrament, as well to honour the feast by this sacred action, as to make yourself worthy of partaking of the graces which God more liberally distributes, in consideration of the united prayers of the faithful on those days.

The second is, when you perceive in yourself any considerable want thereof, as when you are assaulted with more violent, or more frequent temptations than ordinary; for then you must have recourse to this remedy to strengthen you, lest you fall into mortal sin.

And if by misfortune you are already fallen therein, for want of due precaution (which easily happens, not only to young people, but to many others, who are not sensible of the evil before it be already committed) in this case, *Theotime*, take care to confess your sins forthwith; and as for communion, take the advice of your ghostly father, whether it be to receive that day, if he find you sufficiently disposed, or to defer it some days longer, during which time you may prepare yourself for it, by doing penance for your sins, and deploring in the presence of God the misery which has befallen you.

This is what you are to observe concerning the frequency of communion, whilst yet you are young. When you shall be more advanced in age, in judgment, and in the love of God, you may communicate more frequently still, according to the counsel you shall receive in that point, supposing you have a good guide, and according to the desire you shall find in yourself to advance in virtue, and in the service of God: which desire, however it ought to be always very vehement, should daily increase in you. *More frequently when more advanced in age.*

But I advise you at all times, and especially in youth, carefully

to avoid three faults, too common amongst those who communicate upon set days. The first is, of communicating through custom, without proposing to themselves an end or design in their communion. The second is of communicating with little or no preparation, and without devotion. The third is of reaping little or no benefit, persisting still in the same vitious habits of innumerable venial, and many times mortal sins.

These are three faults which prejudice frequent communion in an high degree, and which make one lose the greatest part of the fruit thereof, and render it oftentimes rather hurtful than profitable to us. Let it be your chief care to avoid them, and to this end remember every time you communicate, to comply with these three duties directly opposite to the former faults.

*First, always propose to yourself a good end, which you hope to compass by means of your communion; such as is above-mentioned, viz. to please God, to advance in his grace, and to strengthen yourself in virtue.*

Secondly, Prepare yourself always the best you can, and endeavour to stir yourself up to great devotion; and to this effect take care that you put in practice the directions we have formerly given on this subject. See Vol. I. Part II. Chap. IX, X.

Thirdly, endeavour to amend your evil habits, and to make good use of the graces you received by means of this blessed sacrament. It is a matter of high concern, and of which you ought to take special notice.

Remember that there are two faults which you ought equally to avoid in the holy communion. The one is to communicate too seldom; the other is to communicate often, but to no good effect. By the first, one neglects and loses the graces of God; by the second, one abuses those which one has received: both which lead directly to damnation.

*To communicate seldom, or to no good effect, equally dangerous.*

Fly these two rocks fatal to salvation. Communicate often with the above-mentioned dispositions; and by holy communion amend your life, and advance in virtue, and the love of God. If you do this, *Thee*time, the blessing of God will attend your devotion, and he will daily shower down new graces upon your soul, that you may better serve him all the remainder of your days in this, and enjoy him in the next life for evermore. *Amen.*



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# INSTRUCTIONS

O N

P R A Y E R.

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## PART I.

*On prayer in general.*

**T**HAT I may treat upon prayer in a proper manner, I ought to begin with praying: I ought to beseech God to impart to me that light, which I much need in supplying you, *Theotime*, with all necessary instructions on this subject; and to give you grace to comprehend and follow my directions. Let us therefore jointly repeat that petition, which the disciples of Christ made to their Master: *Lord, teach us to pray* \*.

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## CHAP. I.

*On the excellence of prayer.*

**I**T is to be hoped, *Theotime*, you say some prayers every day: but do you seriously reflect upon the excellence of the action which you perform? Three things, if considered, may give you an exalted notion of that holy exercise; the honour of conversing with God; an unlimited permission to request whatever favour you desire; and a full assurance of obtaining it. What can the world afford that is comparable to this privilege!

Think, if you be able, what it is to converse with God, with him, whose sovereign majesty filleth heaven and earth, who by one word made all creatures out of nothing, and whom the Angels never behold but struck with dread and filled with admiration.

*By prayer you  
converse with God.*

Q<sub>3</sub>

\* Luke xi. i.



miration. The mere sight of a temporal Prince is often esteemed a happiness; and to be indulged the honour of a conversation with a Royal personage is reckoned a singular favour. What then do you think of the honour which you enjoy, of free access whenever you please to the presence of God, and an uncontrouled liberty of addressing your discourse to his Divine Majesty. O *Theotime*, if on the one hand, you consider your own empty vileness; and on the other, the awful grandeur of the Almighty, you will be amazed at the excess of honour which is done you when you are allowed to speak with God. *I will speak to my Lord*, said Abraham, *whereas I am but dust and ashes*\*. If this favourite servant of God looked upon himself not worthy of speaking to his Creator; what should we think of our own baseness? How full of awe should be that respect with which we approach the Omnipotent seated upon his throne, and attended by his whole heavenly court!

But if it be a singular honour to be allowed to speak with God when you please; what a happiness should you deem it to be perpetually empowered to present to him any request whatsoever, provided only it be consistent with what is right. A grant of this ample extent was never made by the most munificent Prince to his most cherished favourite. This is the peculiar bounty of the Almighty. The infinite distance betwixt his greatness and our littleness, his holiness and our sinfulness, and the infinite value of that grace which we crave, so far from inclining him to forbid us his presence, rather induce him to be more urgent in pressing us to come to him, as if he feared lest our consciousness of want of merit should retard us. Hence that encouraging invitation of Christ: *Ask, and it shall be given you*†.

From the words of Christ just quoted it might seem sufficiently manifest, that this encouragement to offer to God whatever petition we desire is accompanied with a full assurance of obtaining the purport of our request. But because a favour so extraordinary, by which humble prayer is enabled to withstand or even to vanquish the Almighty, could not easily gain credit, the Holy Ghost has been pleased to afford us incontestable proofs of this truth.

If we open the Old Testament, there we find it asserted: *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him; unto all that call upon him*

\* Gen. xviii. 27.    † Luke xi. 9.

him in truth\*. The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor†. There we find Moses full of that amazing intrepidity which emboldens him to set himself up to oppose Almighty God, though the divine arm be stretched out to destroy the people of Israel; and the Lord of the Universe, as if too weak to resist the efforts of his own creature, exerted only in prayer, gently expostulates with him, and meekly desires him to desist, in these words of astonishing condescension: *Let me alone, that my wrath may be kindled against them*‡. At another time we find God, as if fearing the consequence of an humble entreaty, forbidding his Prophet Jeremy to bind his avenging hand, or to alter his angry resolution by prayer: *Do not thou pray for this people, and do not withstand me*§. Need we any other proof of the efficacy of prayer?

You will, however, *Theotime*, be more fully convinced of the powerful effect of prayer, when you read the Gospel, and there observe what pains our Blessed Saviour seems to take, to put it beyond a doubt that no prayer we make will ever be frustrated of its aim. To this purpose he engages his word: *Ask, and you shall receive*||. He confirms his promise with an oath in these solemn terms: *Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the father any thing in my name he will give it you*¶. He illustrates this truth by the familiar example of a father, who never refuses bread to the entreaty of his son\*\*; and by that of an unjust judge, who yields to the incessant solicitations of a troublesome widow, though neither the fear of God, nor any regard for man makes impression upon his heart††. Then he concludes, that if men, *being evil*, cannot refuse to prayer the concession of good gifts, much less can God, who is bounty itself, refuse any benefit, and especially the good spirit to them that ask him‡‡.

From these considerations proceed those high encomiums which the Holy Fathers lavish upon prayer, when, amongst many other commendations, they term it, an elevation of the soul to God, an entertainment with God, or, as S. Bernard expresses it, “A familiar communication of the soul with God, while she is inflamed with love and penetrated with humility”§§.

Q 4

CHAP.

\* Ps. cxliv. 18. † Ps. secund. Heb. x. 10. ‡ Exod. xxxii. 10. § Jer. vii. 16. || John xvi. 24. ¶ John xvi. 23. \*\* Luke xi. 11. †† Luke xviii. ‡‡ Luke xi. 13. §§ S. Ber. trac. de via solit. & trac. de inter. domo.

## C H A P. II.

*On the necessity of prayer.*

**I**F prayer be a noble exercise of the soul, it is also one of the causes, and one of the conditions of our salvation. This appears from the solicitude with which this duty is pressed upon us in holy writ. *Let nothing hinder thee,* says the wise man, *from praying always* \*. The same duty of praying always is inculcated by Christ †, and his Apostles ‡. St. Paul in his epistle to the *Ephesians*, speaking of the means of resisting the enemies of our salvation, recommends prayer as the last resource, and as a powerful auxiliary which gives vigour to all other endeavours: *Praying at all times in the spirit* §: that is to say, above all things forget not prayer, what other helps soever you employ.

It is ordained by our Creator that prayer should be necessary both for the obtaining of life everlasting, which being a gratuitous gift of God, he has an unquestionable right to establish the conditions upon which it shall be gained, and for the performing of those good works to which eternal life is promised. These good works are avoiding evil and doing good, the evil we must avoid is sin, which is incompatible with the felicity of heaven into which *there shall not enter any thing defiled* ||. The good we must do, is the practice of the several virtues which merit heaven. But none of these things can be performed without the grace of God, which is not usually obtained but by prayer.

In order to avoid evil we must engage with mighty enemies which wage a perpetual war against us. We must resist the Devil, that determined adversary of man, who seeks all possible occasions to draw us into sin. We must fight against the flesh, that domestic foe which is confederate with Satan, and always watching to betray us into his hands. We must beware of the world, which studies to impose upon us by false maxims, and to decoy us by stratagem into its snares. The exertions of these our enemies are so indefatigable, that we are not secure one moment without the support of the grace of God; hence, as prayer is the usual channel through which divine succours are conveyed,

\* Eccli. xviii. 22. † Luke xviii. 1. ‡ 1 Pet. iv. 7. Rom. xii. 12. † Thess. v. 17. § Ephes. vi. 18. || Apoc. xxi. 27.



veyed, we are exhorted by our Redeemer to be earnest in imploring the divine protection: *Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation* \*.

Divine grace is not less requisite in performing good works, than in avoiding sin. We are not even able to entertain one good thought conducing to eternal happiness, unless the grace of God enlighten our understanding to discern it, and move our will to embrace it: this is the doctrine of the Apostle †. It is impossible we should believe in God, hope in him, or love him as we ought, or duly repent our sins, without the previous grace of the Holy Ghost; this is a decision of the Church ‡. But the more we need the grace of God, the more necessary is prayer. For though our Lord be ever ready to afford us all requisite assistance, he generally expects we should ask for it: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened* §. No promise is made to those who neglect to comply with this injunction.

There is however one difficulty in this matter; why should God require us to sue to him for that, which he already knows we want? Not for his own information: he knows all things. Not to render him propitious: he is goodness itself and unchangeable. Yet this difficulty St. *Augustine* and other Fathers of the Church have resolved.

They answer, that Almighty God in obliging us to sue for grace has had regard to his own honour, and our salvation. He has had regard to his own honour, for in obliging us to pray for his favours, he has given us an opportunity to recollect the need we have of them, and to acknowledge that all blessings, especially such as directly tend to our salvation, are his gift. He has likewise by that obligation brought his favours into greater esteem; for men are but too apt to undervalue that which costs them nothing. "What we have longed for a considerable time is sweet in the acquisition; but what we obtain the instant we wish for soon falls into disregard ¶."

But perhaps in laying upon us the obligation of prayer our bountiful Lord has had less regard to his own honour, than to our salvation.

\* Mat. xxvi. 41. † 2 Cor. iii. 5. ‡ Con. Trid. Sess. 6. can. 3. § Mat. vii. 7. 8. ¶ St. Aug. Ser. 5. de verbis Dom.



salvation. He has hereby occasioned us to exercise three great virtues as often as we pray; *humility*, by confessing our indigences; *hope*, by trusting that his goodness will relieve us; and *charity*, or the love of God, for nothing conduces more effectually to kindle affection in our heart, than ample and unmerited favours, such as those for which in prayer we own ourselves indebted to the divine liberality. We might add that prayer prepares us to receive more abundant graces, in as much as it enlarges our heart by desire. St. *Austin* thinks this the great reason why the Almighty so earnestly exhorts us to persist in prayer; that we may thereby be disposed to receive, what he is disposed to grant. This

*Remark.* learned Saint asserts, that "Our eternal felicity," which far surpasses what either eye "hath seen, ear heard, or ever entered into the heart of man, will be proportionable to the steadiness of our faith, the strength of our hope, and the ardour of our desire \*." His assertion deserves attention.

### C H A P. III.

*On two kinds of prayer; mental, and vocal.*

THERE are two kinds of prayer; the one called mental, the other vocal: both which St. *Augustine* mentions; describing the one, that prayer which the heart produces when it expresses interiorly its own affections; the other, that which utters in words the sentiments of the heart †.

*Mental prayer.* When we pray, we not only beg pardon of God for our sins, and implore those blessings whereof we feel the want; but adoring God whom we love with our whole heart, we humbly profess our dependence on him as the Creator of all things; and returning him thanks for past favours, we own ourselves indebted to him for our very existence, for all the endowments of our body or mind, for the remission of our sins, and for whatever virtue we possess; we also reproach our ingratitude in making the benefits of God an occasion of offending him, instead of pouring forth our souls in the warmest testimonies of thanksgiving for blessings, which, if worth desiring, ought surely to have been esteemed worth a return of thanks, according to the advice of the Apostle ‡. Now which of these duties cannot we

\* St. Aug. ep. 121. ad Probant. † St. Aug. ep. 121. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 18. Phil. iv. 16.

we perform interiorly in the heart, or, as St. Paul expresses it, *praying in the spirit*\*? Indeed, mental prayer being a silent intercourse of the soul with her God, is frequently the most profitable kind of prayer; in it the mind is often more attentive, and the heart more ardent in its desires, and more urgent in its requests. Which made St. *Augustine* say: "The great affair of our salvation is advanced more by sobs than by speeches; more by tears than by words."

Yet vocal prayer, which recites with the lips certain forms of address to God, such as *Vocal prayer.* are found in the Psalms of *David*, in the office of the Church, or in approved books composed to assist the faithful in praying, is very beneficial, often a great help in supplying us with proper thoughts when we discourse with God, and frequently necessary to fix the attention, when persons are not accustomed to pray without a book. Besides, the body should concur with the soul in paying homage to our maker. Hence exterior acts of *adoration* expressed in words and deeds, and denoting interior veneration, have been always used by holy persons. Hence is derived the solemnity of *sacrifice*, which is performed by offering to God the life or the very being of some creature which is consumed in his honour, to signify his supreme dominion over the whole creation; which chief act of religion has been practised not only by the servants of God in all ages, but also by the heathen in worshipping false Gods.

Hence too originates the external fealty of *praise* recommended by the royal Prophet as an offering pleasing to God: *Offer to God the sacrifice of praise; and pay thy vows to the most High*†. But whether you use vocal prayer, *Theotime*, or practise external acts of religion, you should be convinced that your merit does not so much depend on the prolixity of your prayer, or the duration of your pious exercise, as upon the fervour of your heart. "Let your prayer be importune, not diffuse‡."

#### C H A P IV.

##### *On the conditions of Prayer.*

**T**HAT prayer may be acceptable to God it must be accompanied with certain conditions: the first of which is attention.

##### 1. *Attention.*

Without

\* Ephes. vi. 18. † Psalm xlix. 14. ‡ St. Aug. ep. 121.

Without attention all lip-worship is but the shadow of prayer: it is but mocking God. True prayer is, "A cry of the heart\*."

But what is meant by attention in prayer? St. Thomas† distinguishes three kinds of attention: one, to the words; when we take care neither to suppress words, nor to clip or mumble them; but to articulate every sentence entire: another, to the sense or meaning of the words: and a third, to God whom we accost, and to the subject whereof we intend to speak to him. The second kind of attention not being in the power of those who do not understand the words which they pronounce, the first and third may suffice. But "It cannot be expected God will listen to our prayer when we do not attend to it ourselves‡."

Yet something must be allowed to human *Distractions* in weakness. The mind of man in its present *prayer.* state being surrounded with corporal objects, cannot easily raise itself to those which are spiritual; and when it does apply its thoughts to spiritual things, it is soon called off by objects which present themselves to the memory or imagination. It cannot therefore be required of man, that, while at prayer, he keep his attention perpetually fixed. When he begins to pray, let him remind himself of the presence of God to whom he speaks, and of the matter which he proposes to make the subject of his prayer; repenting of that immoderate dissipation to which he may have given himself; then let him recall his thoughts whenever he perceives them wandering, placing himself repeatedly in God's presence, and he need not be apprehensive on account of the distractions which trouble him; they are all involuntary, and neither offend God, nor lessen the merit of his prayer.

Devotion is a condition of prayer not less necessary than attention. Every one esteems it; though few know what it really is. True devotion is a disposition of the heart which makes us perform with affection and fervour all actions that belong to the service of God. It is related of the people of Israel, that they *offered first fruits to the Lord with a devout mind§*: and that when God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle: *All both men and women, with devout mind offered gifts¶*. If these rich offerings could not please God without

\* St. Aug. in Psalm cxviii. v. 145. † 2. 2. q. 83. a. 3. ‡ St. Greg. apud. St. Thomas hic. § Exod. xxxv. 21. ¶ Ibid. v. 29.



without the zealous fervency of the devotion of the heart; what is there in prayer that could please him without devotion? What is there in prayer that could be so acceptable to the Deity, as to merit divine favours, unless the heart were dedicated to God by the ardour of devotion!

The devotion here spoken of is not confined to that sanctified compofure of the exterior, *Exterior and interior devotion.* which lifts up the eyes, wrings the hands, bends the knees, or throws the body prostrate upon the ground. Devotion is chiefly in the heart, and comprises three pious acts; a *respect* for the Divine Majesty, an *humble acknowledgment* of the wants of the soul, and an earnest *desire* to be assisted by the goodness of God. Exterior devotion is often mimicked by the pious groans and holy gesticulations of the hypocrite. Yet true interior devotion does not renounce outward actions which proceed from the abundance of the heart, or which contribute to affect the soul; but it seeks retirement in the use of uncommon gestures. In public it shuns singularity, which might produce vain glory, or bring devotion into disrepute. It hates all indecent lolling, gazing or prattling; but is fond of an humble posture, and a modest comportment, which shew the heart is full of the action which it performs.

It cannot be doubted but mortal sin is a great obstacle to the effects of prayer; because a person in the state of such sin is unworthy of God's favours; and as long as he is pleased with his condition, and *turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination* \*. But the moment he *humbleth himself*, and desireth to be converted from his evil ways, his *prayer shall pierce the clouds* †. The publican mentioned in the Gospel was a sinner when he went up into the temple to pray; but he implored the divine mercy struck with sorrow to the heart; and his prayer was so agreeable to God, that *he went down to his house justified* ‡. He is the model and the encouragement of repenting sinners.

We need not wonder that to pray should be an effectual method to draw down heavenly benedictions, when we reflect that every favour we obtain by prayer is granted not so much to us, as to Christ, nor so much for our sake, as for the sake of Christ: our Blessed Lord himself having directed that all our requests should

\* Prov. xxviii. 9. † Eccli. xxxv. 21. ‡ Luke xviii.



should be presented in his name: *If you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you* \*. But those people are far from praying in the name of Christ, who petition for any thing detrimental to their salvation: such persons abuse their Saviour, instead of making him their Mediator. Nor do those Christians answer the intention of their Redeemer's injunction to pray in his name, who are ever anxious in soliciting for temporal blessings, but cold and indifferent when salvation is their concern. If they make vows, or pray with more than ordinary fervour, you may be almost sure they wish to be delivered from some temporal calamity, or desire some worldly advantage for themselves or their children. A vow to give an alms, or to perform some pilgrimage in order to acquire chastity, humility, or any other virtue, or to escape some dangerous occasion of sin, is rare indeed: although Christ gave his life to rescue us from sin, and to purchase for our souls the ornaments of virtue.

We are not however forbidden to pray *How to pray for* for temporal things, as we are not forbidden *temporal blessings.* to desire them†. But our principal reason for desiring them should be, that we may make them conducive to the glory of God, and our own eternal happiness‡. How criminal would it be to make sin subservient to their attainment! We should not even ask for such delusive possessions, but with a degree of apprehension lest they should turn to our spiritual ruin. "When you pray for the things of this world, leave the granting or the refusing of your request to God, the physician of your soul, who knows best how to distinguish the medicine from the poison§." In short, *Theotime*, in this regard stick close to the rule of Christ: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these temporal things shall be added unto you*: as far as they may be subordinate to your eternal welfare.

If perseverance gives an additional value to  
 5. *Perseverance.* all good actions, this is as far more particularly true of prayer, as prayer is a duty of greater importance. On this account our Lord in exhorting us to pray makes use of the terms *seeking* and *knocking*¶, because when a person seeks what he has lost, or knocks at a door which remains shut, he commonly persists for some time. On this account also  
 he

\* John xvi. 23. † St. Tho. 2. 2. q. 84. 2. 6. ‡ Ibid. § St. Aug. Ser. 53. de verb. Dom. ¶ Mat. vii. 7.

he reminds us that a person may sometimes wrest from his friend by the importunity of perseverance favours not granted to the allurements of affection\*. The Almighty, though determined to make us partake of his blessings in due time, does not always impart the tokens of his kindness as soon as we desire: perhaps he gives us patience under afflictions, while he differs removing them; thus he acted with his Apostle; bestowing on him that shield of fortifying grace, which enabled him to stand victorious amidst the assaults of Satan, instead of withdrawing him from many harassing temptations†. He acts like a good physician, who rather prescribes “according to the nature of the disease, than “according to the inclination of the patient‡.”

## CHAPTER V.

### *On joining almsdeeds and fasting with prayer.*

**A**lmsdeeds and fasting though distinct virtues from prayer, are however its proper attendants, and may therefore claim a place next to its conditions.

Fasting and other corporal austerities help much to the exterminating of sin, which is the chief obstacle to the efficacy of prayer. The soul pressingly invited to lay her wants before her God, is too feeble to rise to heaven whilst weighed down by the encumbrance of earthly attachments, or whilst she indulges criminal inclinations which glue the heart to creatures: but fasting and other macerations of the flesh, mingling a wholesome bitterness with the objects of concupiscence, contribute to wean and to disengage our sensual affections; until our mental powers recovering their liberty take their flight upwards to tender their vows and supplications to their Creator. That the chastisement of the body by mortification is a suitable and a very serviceable supply to prayer, might be shewn from many concurrent instances recorded in holy Writ§.

*Fasting.*

The maxims of sacred Writers, the documents of the Holy Fathers, and the practice of the Church in recommending fasting as a proper attendant on prayer to facilitate its ascent to heaven, join in the same advice the exercise of almsdeeds, that our humble prayer

*Almsdeeds.*

\* Luke xi. † 2 Cor. xii. ‡ St. Aug. in Psalm xii. § 2 Esd. i. 4. Judith iv. 8. Dan. ix. 3. Act. xiii. 3, &c.

prayer may obtain a favourable audience from the Deity. Charitable offices attract the divine regard, and provide for the pious author the friendly support of heaven in time of need. *Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil*\*. Do not forget to do good and to impart: for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained†. That memorable protection, which one of the highest Angels, commissioned by the great Sovereign of the Universe, afforded with assiduous attention to young *Toby* in distress, was the effect of prayer though not without her sister-attendants, fasting and almsdeeds; of prayer, which in such company is preferable to treasures of gold‡. Wherefore, *Theotime*, "If you be desirous that your prayer should fly up with rapidity to the throne of God, mount it upon the wings of almsdeeds and fasting§." See Vol. I. Part. IV. Chap. XXII.

## C H A P. VI.

*On the time and place for prayer.*

*The time for prayer.*

**P**RAYER being a duty of the utmost importance, it is natural to enquire when and where we ought to pray? Christ himself appoints the time, telling us; *We ought always to pray*¶. What! Should we always have a prayer-book in hand? Should we be always upon our knees? Or, at least, should our mind be perpetually without interruption elevated to God? Certain bigoted Zealots who anciently maintained this extravagant explanation of the words of our Saviour, were censured by the Fathers of the Church as Heretics, under the denomination of *Euchites*, or, persons ever praying. And surely with great reason; for though *David* said: *I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be always in my mouth*||: It cannot be supposed that neither his lips nor mind were ever otherwise employed. He praised God very frequently: and so ought we to pray. He never let pass any long time without praising God: such should be our practice with regard to prayer. They who neglect the duty of prayer though but for one whole week, must have very confined notions of their dependance upon the Almighty, and the multiplicity of their own exigencies.

\* Eccli. xxix. 15. † Heb. xiii. 16. ‡ Tob. xii. 8. § St. Aug. Ser. 60. de tem. ¶ Luke xviii. 1. || Psalm xxxiii. 2.



exigencies. It is to be feared that such sloth puts a grievous affront upon their Creator, their Preserver, their constant and disinterested Benefactor. At least, if such wilful omission be continued for one month, who will pretend to exculpate it from the guilt of mortal sin? What then shall we say of those sluggards, who let entire years slip away, whilst they doze on, locked up in habitual indolence!

O my dear *Theotime*, have a horror of such conduct. Make it your daily practice to pray to your Creator upon your bended knees morning and evening: and to hear mass devoutly as often as you can. See Vol. I. Part II. Chap. XI, XII, XIII. Make it also your custom to begin your principal actions in the day with raising up your heart to God in order to beg his blessing upon what you do. If you have the misfortune to fall into sin; immediately return to God by contrition. If you apprehend being seduced by sin; pray that you may not be tempted above your strength. Pray when you overcome temptation, returning thanks to your Deliverer. Pray if in danger of death: but forget not, as too many do, to offer your first prayer on that occasion for the pardon of your sins, and for an eternal union with God, whom you desire to love with your whole heart. In short, perform every action with such piety, and such a total oblation of your heart to God, that the most trivial may be ennobled by that royal virtue charity, which residing in your breast actuates every motion of your soul. Thus will you pray without ceasing, as much as the Holy Ghost requires.

Our faith teaches that God is every where: *The place for* and therefore we may every where have re- *prayer.* course to him by prayer. Yet some places are more favourable to that attention, devotion, and respect, which an action so sacred and so tremendous demands. If our prayer be private, and unconnected with that of others, our Saviour advises retirement into our closet\*. But when we act in concert with others in public prayer, he sends us to some place set apart for divine worship†; and honours such place with the distinguished appellations of *house of God*‡, and *house of prayer*§.

The prayer we make in public at stated times has certainly many advantages, if performed *Public prayer.* in a becoming manner. On those occasions

Vol. II.

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\* Mat. vi. 7. † Luke xviii. 12. ‡ Mat. xii. 4. § Mat. xxi. 13.



our souls are moved to greater devotion by observing the religious behaviour of our brethren; and our own piety may help to their edification: our feeble endeavours are supported by the firmer virtue of our neighbours; and our suffrages combined with theirs offer a kind of holy violence to heaven. See Vol. I. Part II. Chap. XXII.

But if private devotions were entirely omitted, our souls would be often apt to languish for want of that spiritual nourishment they receive from prayer; for we have not always an opportunity of assembling in public worship. During intervals between the times of the public service of the Church, our closet is a good asylum into which we may retreat from the distractions of the world, and shut out with the crowd, and the bustle of temporal affairs, many incitements to hypocrisy and vanity which might molest our sweet intercourse with God.

Wherefore, *Theotime*, frequent religious assemblies, where God is duly worshiped, taking care to bring thither proper dispositions; accustom yourself also to converse with God religiously in private. The Church service more nearly resembles the concordant voice of the heavenly choirs; but private devotion is a permanent source of help and consolation.

## C H A P. VII.

### *On the Invocation of Saints.*

*Lawful to invoke the Saints.*

IT is lawful to desire the Saints in heaven to pray for us. This has always been the belief of the Catholic Church: whilst they who have combated this doctrine, *have trembled for fear where there was no fear* \*. They have apprehended, that by invoking the Saints we raise them to a level with Christ, our Mediator. Whereas we loudly profess that the distance between them is infinite, the same as between the creature and the Creator: and that whatever blessings we expect through the intercession of the Saints must be derived to us from the merits of Jesus. It cannot however be denied, but holy persons now living upon earth may in some measure become our mediators, or may interpose with Almighty God in our favour, making intercession for us; else why did St. Paul desire the faithful

\* Psalm xiii. 5.

to pray for him\*. And why did he pray for the faithful†? Although Christ be a Mediator of a very different nature from St. Paul, from the faithful upon earth, and from the Saints in heaven; because *Jesus Christ* alone is our Redeemer: Yet why should we be eternally obliged to wrangle about words? Why should terms, by a misrepresentation of their meaning, make a perpetual breach of faith amongst us?

If it be not less lawful to supplicate in our behalf the suffrages of the Saints now reigning in a state of bliss and immortality, than to solicit this same charity from our friends in their present mortal state, compassed with infirmity like ourselves; why should it be less profitable? Have they now less charitable solicitude for our good, because secure of their own reward in a kingdom wherein *charity never falleth away*‡, but is improved and perfected? Have they now less knowledge of our indigencies, when they discern so distinctly many occurrences here below, that they take a joyful part in what is transacted in the conversion of every repenting sinner§? Yet every one thinks it a benefit to partake in the prayers of his living friends. The very abettors of the reformation still retain the practice of requesting each others prayers, and esteem it a salutary expedient. What excuse then, *Theotime*, can you plead, if you neglect so great a help to your salvation? You have the daily example of the Catholic Church for imploring the intercession of the Saints: you have daily festivals on which that sacred community honours the memory of some Saint; and on which, while the faithful give supreme worship to the Deity, they pay that deference to the Saint, who is the friend of God, as to request the favour of his prayers and patronage. “The Saints are our sentinels, whose protection is as safe, as it is eminent¶.”

## C H A P. VIII.

### *On the Lord's prayer.*

INSTRUCTIONS on prayer would be incomplete without a word upon the Lord's prayer; the excellence of which cannot be questioned if we reflect that its Author was Wisdom incarnate. In fact, the

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form

\* Col. iv. 3. † Col. i. 3. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 8. § Luke xv. 7. ¶ St. Amb. in SS Gerv. & Protas.

form and subject of this prayer are worthy of its Author. In words so few, that the meanest capacity might learn them, it comprises wisdom so elevate, that the brightest genius might admire it: and every part is arranged in the most beautiful order. In seven petitions we are authorized by Christ himself to sue to God for whatever is great in heaven, or inestimable upon earth: we first beg the glory of God may be propagated; and then, according to the order of things, that the salvation of men may be accomplished. Thus the brevity of this prayer does not lessen its dignity: "Though concise, it contains the substance of the whole Gospel \*."

These first words: *Our Father, who art in heaven*, are full of weighty meaning which is not discovered without attention. They conciliate to us the benevolence of the Almighty, since thereby we profess him to be a bountiful Father, and the potent Lord of heaven; characters which are ever dear to him, and which induce him to cherish those that own them. They rouse our confidence in him; as they express his goodness and power, the grounds of our hope. "What will he not grant to us his children, having already granted us the right of children †?" They kindle our affection for him: for what is more amiable than a parent? These dispositions of confidence and affection in us, and partiality in our favour in Almighty God, are wonderfully adapted to the entrance upon prayer.

Several other pious hints are crowded in that preface, which are also well accommodated to that place. "If God be our Father, how anxious ought we to be to serve him in every thing ‡." "If God be our Father, we should serve him, not out of fear, but affection §." "If our Father be in heaven, our whole lives ought to aspire after a heavenly inheritance ¶." Should these precious truths occur to our attention when we begin this prayer, we hardly can entertain thoughts relative to this earth while we repeat it.

But how is God our Father? First, by creating us to his image. *Is not he thy Father, that has created thee ||*? Secondly, and more properly, by adopting us for his children by means of sanctifying grace, whereby we are made conformable to the image of his

\* Tert. L. de or Dom. † St. Aug. Ser. 183 de temp. ‡ St. Aug. Ser. de temp. § Idem ibid. ¶ St. Aug. hom. 4ta: inter 50. || Deut. xxxii. 6.



*his son* \*; and acquire a right of an eternal inheritance, as *sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ* †. In either of these acceptations of the word *Father*, we may address the Lord's prayer to the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity in quality of one God, since the works of creation and sanctification, by which we are made the children of God, are the works of power and goodness the common attributes of the Godhead, not peculiar to any one of the divine Persons. But if this prayer be ever addressed to the first Person, the reason hereof is, because the common name *Father* is also the proper name of that person, and therefore not seldom ascribed to him; as we are also accustomed to ascribe power to the Father, wisdom to the Son, and goodness to the Holy Ghost.

Why do we say he is *in heaven*, who filleth all things with his presence? Because there he chiefly displays the splendour of his glory.

Why do we call him *our Father*, speaking in the name of more persons than one? Because as we are all brethren, and are all engaged in one common cause, the work of the salvation of our souls, we should all feel and be interested as much for others as for ourselves. "The Emperor and the mendicant, the master and "the servant are brethren, having all the same Father ‡."

*Hallowed be thy name.* This is the first of those three petitions which relate to the glory of God. 1. *Petition.* "What can be more just, than "that he who has been permitted to call God his Father, should "instantly request the exaltation of God's glory, postponing to "that noble consideration every regard for private advantage §?" We desire that the name of God (that is, in effect, God himself), may be sanctified. Not that any increase of sanctity can possibly accrue to God, who is already infinitely Holy: but the knowledge of this sanctity may be farther extended; and this sanctity, where known, may be more duly respected. The design therefore of this petition is, to beseech God that his own admirable perfections may be more universally known, more ardently loved, and more respectfully worshiped by all his creatures.

*Thy kingdom come.* Next to desiring that the name of God may be exalted, the true 2. *Petition.*

R 3

children

\* Rom. viii. 29. † Rom. viii. 16, 17. ‡ St. Aug. hom. 4. inter 30. § St. Chry. hom. 20. in Mat.



children of our heavenly Father should wish that his kingdom may be enlarged to the utmost bounds of the creation. This always was, and always will be, the immense extent of the dominion of his power and providence \*. But the spiritual dominion of God is at present circumscribed: it is but begun by his grace upon earth, where *his kingdom is within us* †; it is but partly completed by that glory into which the just enter immediately after death: and it will not be fully accomplished till after the general resurrection, when the enemies of God, the Devil, sin, and death, shall be subdued; *that God may be all in all* ‡. This perfect accomplishment of the reign of God, and the glory which will thence result to our Creator, we have chiefly, even more than our own happiness, in view in this petition.

*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

### 3. *Petition.*

As the perfect accomplishment of the reign of God, the object of the foregoing petition, is not to be expected in this world, we are taught in the mean time to entreat that his glory be at last so far promoted upon earth, that all human beings may submit to his orders, acquiesce to his appointments, and fulfil his desires. In heaven only do we find such beautiful subordination to the divine will, that the pleasure of the Almighty regulates every thought, and every motion. To this sweet conformity of the Blessed spirits to the divine pleasure we look up, when we utter the present petition; this we recollect with joy, and thus we propose to universal notice as the model of that obedience we wish to be established upon earth.

But did we sincerely desire that which our lips pronounce in these three petitions, we should turn our first care to the reformation of our own lives. Can we heartily wish that God may be honoured; while we wilfully dishonour him by our conduct? that his spiritual dominion be accomplished; while we obstinately revolt from his allegiance? or, that his will and pleasure be fulfilled; while we thwart his desires, murmur at his appointments, and trample upon his sacred ordinances? May not the Almighty justly expostulate with us in these severe terms: *Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant* §: unless we make our actions correspond with our prayers? It is true such a change of heart must be the work of the most High; nothing less than the grace of God is able

\* Psalm cxlii. 13. † Luke xvii. 21. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 28. § Luke xix. 22.

able to subdue our stubborn and rebellious tempers; Hence each of these petitions implies a request for that supernatural assistance which may enable us to give glory to God by our deportment.

*Give us this day our daily bread.* Having already implored what may conduce to the glory of God; we beg, in the subsequent part of this prayer, for what may contribute to our salvation. What had only been implied in the preceding petitions, and could only by inference appear to be included in them, a solicitation for the grace of God, is now positively expressed; the grace of God is that spiritual daily bread we here crave: though our corporal sustenance be also another object of this petition \*.

The rich are to ask for corporal sustenance, as well as the poor; because the rich as well as the poor depend on God. Yet all are to desire only a moderate competency; and are therefore only allowed to ask for the bread of the day, *our daily bread*. All are to request only such food or raiment as is the gift of God; and therefore nothing prepared by sin; for, "Whatever is prepared by sin is a gift of the Devil †." In short, all are to make this petition for corporal supplies in behalf of others, as well as of themselves; and therefore all should communicate their portion with the poor ‡.

Though we ought to restrain our desires when we sue for what relates to the body; yet when we crave what may benefit the soul, when we implore the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; the spiritual sustenance of the word of God, or of the grace of God; or what comprehends a treasure of all spiritual succours, the life-giving food of the holy Eucharist; we are not to curb, or to contract our wishes; but daily to redouble our importunity for the daily support of our spiritual life: *To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound*, in proportion as he enlarges his soul by desire.

*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them* 5th Petition, *that trespass against us.* The grace of God, the spiritual life of the soul, being any day liable to be forfeited, either immediately by one mortal sin, or successively in consequence of several venial transgressions, which incessantly weakening the supernatural vigour of the soul prepare it for a sudden spiritual death, we are therefore furnished by our Lord with another petition as a help to

R 4

recover

\* St. Aug. Ser. 9. de diversis. † St. Chry. hom. 14. op. imp. in Mat.  
‡ St. Chry. Ib. § Mat. xxv. 29.

recover that spiritual life, when lost. To this end we must humbly implore the pardon of our sins, acknowledging our guilt, with regret for our offences, and a purpose of amendment. To crave pardon for our sins without these penitential dispositions, is to insult the goodness of the Almighty. We must own our sin to be a *trespass*, that is, an injury which we have done to God, or a debt of justice which we have contracted; that we may not presume to look for mercy, until we resolve to make what compensation shall be required for the injury, which we have committed.

It may appear extraordinary that Christ has enjoined us to protest we forgive our enemies, at the very time we supplicate the forgiveness of our own offences. But such an injunction is both just and wise. Just, for if God our common Father forgive us, surely justice requires that we forgive our brethren. Wise, because no other argument presses this duty of pardoning our enemies more urgently upon us. See Vol. I. Part IV. Chap. XVI.

*Lead us not into temptation.* In the foregoing 6. *Petition.* petition, we deplored our past sins; in this, we take our precautions against future offences, by professing our good resolutions to shun sin and its occasions; and by begging the grace of perseverance.

But why do we entreat that God will not *lead us into temptation*? Not because God is the author of sin; it would be blasphemy to assert it. God is not a tempter of evils: *he tempteth no man*\*. God only sometimes permits temptation for particular reasons. Neither do we present this petition because we desire not to be tempted: That would be desiring a particular favour which is seldom granted to any one. Besides, temptation is often beneficial to us. See Vol. I. Part III. Chap. IX. Art. II. All that we desire when we petition not to be led into temptation is, that God will either ward off extraordinary temptations, or make us equal to the combat in them: and that in ordinary trials, he will enable us to remain firm in the cause of virtue.

*Deliver us from evil.* After having requested 7. *Petition.* to be preserved from the evil of sin, we crown all our supplications by subjoining one general entreaty, to be delivered from all evils whatsoever; past, present, or to come: and especially from the Devil, that malignant spirit, who is the contriver of all mischief†. Hence, “ When a Chris-  
“ tian

\* James i. 13. † S. Cyp. L. de or. Dom.



"man is under affliction, he should supply his sobs and tears, he should begin and end his prayer with this petition."

C H A P. IX.

*On the Angelical Salutation.*

**A**FTER reciting the Lord's prayer, the faithful are generally accustomed, from primitive usage, in order more easily to obtain what they have petitioned, to pronounce that congratulatory address, with which the Angel *Gabriel* approached the Blessed Virgin when he announced to her the happy tidings of the Incarnation of the eternal Word for our Redemption; together with another short address, wherewith the same holy Virgin was saluted by her kinswoman, *St. Elizabeth*, the mother of *St. John the Baptist*; making that combined salutation the language of their own hearts; and concluding it with a short request which the Catholic Church has annexed. If this salutation be examined, and its meaning candidly discussed, there is no doubt but it will appear to be both rational and profitable.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* These inspired words, which express two extraordinary prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin *Mary*, her supereminent sanctity, and her supereminent dignity, lay the foundation of that distinguished devotion, which the Catholic Church has always professed to this cherished favourite of Heaven.

After the first greeting word, *Hail*, denoting respect and joy for her happiness, *Mary* is declared by the celestial delegate, *full of grace*. This plenitude of grace imports those singular gifts, and eminent virtues Theological and moral, which were infused into the soul of this Virgin Queen, the first moment of her conception, proportionable to that sublime station of mother of God, to which she was elected; which gifts and virtues never ceased to rise in value and perfection to the last moment of her life.

He adds: *The Lord is with thee*. The Almighty is not satisfied with ornamenting thy soul with the most precious decorations of grace, which ever embellished a pure creature; he takes an intimate complacency in thy celestial beauty, and unites himself wholly to thee,



thee, whilst thou art reciprocally absorbed in him. For the soul of *Mary* was not only full of accumulated graces, but also replenished with her God, before the Angel announced the conception of Christ in her womb.

The deputy of Heaven then pronounces *Mary, Blessed among women*. The holy mother of the Precursor of Christ repeats the very same acclamation of applause. The former, ravished with the contemplation of *Mary's* transcendent merits, which had rendered her chaste bowels the choice receptacle wherein the Son of God would become incarnate, gives vent to that exuberant eulogy which was to flow in from all nations upon her head, because she was to be the channel through which all benedictions would be derived from Christ upon all nations. The latter views her already overshadowed by the divine spirit, possessing in her womb the height of blessings, as God *blessed for ever\**; as man, richly stored with blessings suitable to a *beloved son, in whom* the Father is *well-pleased†*, and through whom all mankind, even the holy Virgin herself, are *blessed with all spiritual blessings‡*; and in a transport of exultation, having proclaimed her cousin, *Blessed among women*, she immediately proceeds: *And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

Thus an Angel, and a Saint; an Angel purposely deputed from heaven to wait upon the *Virgin Mary*, and a Saint purposely inspired to sound her praise; both loudly publish, both announce to the whole world, that *Mary* has been singled out by the Almighty, to be ennobled with grace and dignity above the whole race of mankind. Now can any Christian question whether it be rational to honour her, whom God himself vouchsafes to honour with such unparalelled tokens of esteem? or whether it be profitable to make our court to a servant of the Almighty, first both in favour and in power, nay, closely allied in blood to the Son of God? "The son will not fail to listen to the mother, nor the " Father to the Son§."

Rejoicing therefore, at the mention of the  
*The supplicatory* Incarnation of the Son of God, the fountain of  
*part.* mercy, grace, and salvation; and at the remembrance of those endowments and privileges of the Blessed Virgin above rehearsed, and of her present prerogative of an exaltation in glory proportionate to her grace and dignity,

on

\* Rom. ix. 5. † Mat. xix. 5. ‡ Ephes. i. 3. § S. Ber. ser. de nativ. Virg.

on which we ground a firm confidence in the support of her patronage, we proceed with the whole body of the faithful to solicit the intercession of the Queen of heaven in our behalf, using that form of supplication, which the Catholic Church has taught us: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.*

*Mary*, the name of the Virgin, added to the inspired words of the Angel in the beginning of this salutation, and here again repeated by the Church, reminding us in one word of the prerogatives of her, whom we address, awakens that trust we repose in her prayers: as *Jesus*, signifying Saviour, the name of her Son, added to the words of St. *Elizabeth*, is to every Christian a most dear memorial of our Redemption through Christ.

When we entitle her, *Mother of God*, we at once profess her heavenly interest, and make known our right to her maternal protection; since *Jesus*, the child of her bowels, though true God, yet being also true man, *is not ashamed to call us brethren*\*.

We style ourselves *sinners*, which title is our most just due, and has this peculiar advantage, that *Mary* is the Advocate of such, when they cry for mercy repenting of their iniquities. She remembers that for sinners her dear Son shed his blood.

But though we avow our constant want of her aid, this assistance we chiefly implore for the *hour of our death*; for that dreadful hour, when we shall be least able to help ourselves, and when our enemies will redouble their exertions.

Wherefore, O Holy Mother of God, refuge of sinners, mother of pity and comfort, forsake us not, we beseech thee, in any period of our lives, but especially in those last critical moments, upon the event of which depends our eternity. Intercede for us with thy Son, *Jesus Christ*, that he judge us not according to the rigour of his justice; but with that mercy which he purchased for us through the merits of his death, the only hope of our salvation.

On Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, See more Vol. I. Part II. Chap. XIX.

ON

\* Heb. ii. 11.

ON  
MEDITATION,  
OR  
MENTAL PRAYER.

---

PART II.

**A**LTHOUGH what has been already said concerning prayer be applicable, in a great measure, to mental as well as vocal prayer, yet the exercise of meditation is so important and advantageous to all who desire to advance in piety, that it deserves to be more fully and more particularly explained.

ARTICLE I.

*What is Meditation?*

**I**T is not what the generality of men imagine, who conceive that meditation is a high speculation of sublime things, that has no other end than to acquire an elevated knowledge which others have not; in this they are much deceived. Meditation does not consist in elevated thoughts, but in such as are good and profitable; nor only in pious thoughts, but in holy affections which arise from thence, as the hatred of sin, the love of God, fear of his judgments, and in the resolutions which are made in consequence of these thoughts and affections.

So that to meditate, is to apply our mind attentively to the truths of salvation, to stir up ourselves to love them, and to form good resolutions. Meditation is a serious and frequent reflection, made in the presence of God and by the assistance of his grace upon the truths of salvation, in order to know them perfectly, to love them, and to put them in practice. Observe well this definition, and weigh attentively each word, because there is not one without its sense and signification.

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## ARTICLE II.

*Without meditating it is hard to secure our salvation.*

**T**HIS truth follows from the foregoing definition; for if meditation be nothing else but a frequent and serious reflection upon the truths of salvation, in order to know them, to love them, and to practise them, it is certain that it is also difficult to secure our salvation without meditating, as it is hard to practise the truths of salvation without loving them, to love them without knowing them, or to know them without thinking seriously and frequently on them (which is what we call meditation); and without often imploring the divine grace to know them, to love them, and to practise them, which is obtained principally by prayer. Hence the scripture attributes the frequent perdition of men and the general depravity of morals to the want of reflection. *With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart* \*.

## ARTICLE III.

*Meditation is not an invention of man, but of God.*

**T**HEY who neglect meditation, imagine that it is an indifferent practice of devotion, only invented by men; but they are grossly deceived, because God is the first and principal author of it.

As soon as he had given the law to his people, he caused the continual meditating on it to be strongly recommended to them. *These things which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes* †. And a little after: *Lay up these my words in your hearts and minds, and hang them for a sign on your hands, and place them between your eyes. Teach your children that they meditate on them* ‡.

To enforce this truth more powerfully, he at the same time ordains, that all living creatures which do not ruminate, that is, which chew not the cud, should be reputed unclean, and not be offered to him in sacrifice §.

For this reason also David begins his Psalms with the praise of meditation, saying, *The just shall always have his will in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night* ||. He adds, that this exercise of meditation will make the just resemble a fair tree

\* Jer. xii. 11. † Deut. vi. 7, 8. ‡ Deut. xi. 18. 19. § Levit. xi. || Ps. i. 2.



tree planted by the water-side, which will bear fruit in its season; because as the water moistening the root of the tree, makes it fertile and abounding in fruit; so meditation upon holy things, filling the heart with good thoughts and pious affections, renders it rich in virtue and good works.

#### A R T I C L E IV.

*Meditation is not so difficult as many imagine.*

**I**S it not a strange thing, that men should account that hard, yea even impossible, which is performed daily in regard to every other concern, except that of salvation? What merchant is there, who does not often and seriously think on traffick? He who has a suit at law, does he not daily revolve in his mind the means to gain it, and that not lightly and hastily, but seriously, with attention, with affection, putting in execution all the means he can devise? This is properly meditation.

Do you not yourself, *Theotime*, who are as yet perhaps in your studies, meditate when you are at your book, composing any thing, or studying a question in philosophy, or any other science? You apply your mind to comprehend it, to remember, and reap profit from what you learn: all this is nothing else but meditating. Why then cannot you do that for your eternal salvation, which you perform for a temporal science?

I say more: Why can you not perform that for your salvation, which you do for your diversion, on which you think so often with so much application and pleasure, that frequently you have no other thoughts but those, and they wholly take up your attention? Why do you meditate so easily upon your pleasures, and cannot meditate on your salvation? Why, in fine, can you do less for virtue than the impious do for vice and wickedness? When they have an ill design to put in execution, they perpetually think on it, they take no greater pleasure than in seeking and finding the means to effect it. This is what the scripture calls, to meditate iniquity\*. Why cannot you meditate upon virtue, and perform that for it which others do for vice, and which you yourself perhaps have done? Say not then any more, that meditation is too hard. How shameful is it that Christians should so eagerly pursue their pleasures, yet be so supinely negligent in the affair of salvation!

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\* Psalm xxxv. 5.

## ARTICLE V.

*Meditation may be rendered easy.*

**N**OTWITHSTANDING the difficulties which may be apprehended in this pious exercise, there are many means to make it easy.

The first and most efficacious is a desire of salvation, and a persuasion of the necessity of securing it. He who loves his salvation will frequently and readily think on it, seek with much care the means to obtain it, and make them easy and familiar. Nothing is difficult to him who loves. Among these means meditation and prayer deserve the first place.

Next to them are three others which will facilitate this exercise, viz. method, practice, and the assistance of divine grace.

You must first learn a method as an introduction to that exercise you are unacquainted with, and which teaches how you are to behave therein. *Three means to facilitate meditation.*

Secondly, you must put it in practice, there being nothing which more facilitates an action than the frequent exercise thereof; exercise making you overcome in all things the greatest difficulties, and rendering that easy which before appeared impracticable.

Lastly, and above all, you must be assisted therein by the grace of God, who is the father of lights, and author of all pious affections. Upon this you must rely in this exercise, more than upon all human industry; and for this effect you must in your meditation beg it earnestly of Almighty God.

## ARTICLE VI.

*Young persons are capable of Meditation, and have need of it.*

**Y**OUTH is capable of meditation, because there is nothing impossible to the grace of God, who can do all things; and God, who is pleased with young persons, is never wanting to communicate himself to them, when they seek him in sincerity of heart.

Besides, young minds not being as yet encumbered with the care of worldly affairs, nor prevented by violent passions, nor engaged in so many vices as in a more advanced age, are capable of applying themselves to the thoughts of pious things, and more

apt to receive the light God communicates in this holy exercise, and the good motions which his grace inspires therein.

I said moreover, that young people have need of meditating, for this reason, which seems to be convincing; because the lightness of mind natural to their age, hinders them ordinarily from applying themselves so much as they ought to the thoughts of their salvation: they easily apprehend what is taught them, though it soon escapes their memory for want of sufficient reflection. This is what hinders them from advancing in virtue; they have therefore great need of some means which may keep their mind attentive, and accustom them to weigh things with reflection: now a little exercise in meditation is of wonderful service for this purpose.

The same lightness of mind hinders their employing with advantage the most necessary means of salvation, and particularly three, that is, prayer, the word of God, and pious books.

They pray without attention and affection; they recite their prayers without thinking on what they say; they speak to God with their lips, but not with their heart; their tongue talks, but their heart is silent. And yet it is the heart alone which prays and obtains; it is that alone to whose voice and language Almighty God gives ear. Now this prayer of the heart is learnt in the exercise of meditation.

The same is to be said of the word of God; they often hear it with a wandering and distracted mind; or, if they give attention to it, they make no reflection on the truths they have learnt, which is the cause why they so soon slip out of their memory, and they lose all the fruit of them. The like befalls them in reading pious books, to which they apply themselves with difficulty, and is to them an irksome task; hence they reap no spiritual profit. This is owing to their lightness of mind, which cannot apply itself to serious and profitable thoughts, unless accustomed and brought to it betimes. Now this is performed by the exercise of meditation, which accustoms them to raise their mind to God, to fix their thoughts upon an object of piety, to form holy affections therein, and make suitable resolutions.



## ARTICLE VII.

*A Confirmation of the former Truths out of the sacred Scripture.*

**I**F young persons were not capable of meditating, and if they stood not in need of it, would the scripture exhort them so frequently, as it does in the book of *Proverbs* and elsewhere, to so holy an exercise? *My Son*, says the wise man, *if thou wilt receive my words, and wilt hide my commandments with thee, that thy ear may hearken to wisdom: incline thy heart to know prudence. For if thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thy heart to prudence: if thou shalt seek her as money, and shalt dig for her as for a treasure: that is, employing the same diligence, and as much affection: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God\**. Observe, *Theotime*, this comparison of the care young people ought to bring to the search of wisdom, with that which is employed in seeking money, and discovering a hidden treasure; and remember the earnestness with which you sometimes searched after the means of getting it. How often have you meditated upon it, and frequently without effect? Why will you do less for your eternal salvation, on which you can never think without some advantage?

In the third Chapter, he exhorts young persons to think often on the means of their salvation, which he comprehends under the names of *Mercy* and *Truth*: he would have them always before their eyes, and written in their hearts. What is this but to meditate? In another chapter he says, *My Son, hearken to my words, and incline thy ear to my sayings. Let them not depart from thy eyes, keep them in the midst of thy heart: for they are life to those that find them†*.

And in another; *Son, preserve the precepts of your father, and neglect not the admonitions of your mother.*

*Let thy thoughts be upon the precepts of God, and meditate continually on his commandments: and he will give thee a heart, and the desire of wisdom shall be given to thee‡*.

## ARTICLE VIII.

*On the great Benefit of Meditation.*

**T**HE great and general benefit we gather from this holy exercise is, that we acquire by it a solid knowledge of the truths of salvation, learn to love them, and put them in practice. These are the three effects of meditation, which cannot be sufficiently esteemed, because they comprehend all that is necessary for salvation.

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\* Prov. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. † Prov. iv. 20, 21, 22. ‡ Eccli. vi. 37.



Besides those effects of meditation there are two others, which deserve a particular consideration, because they are the foundation of the rest: *viz.* Meditation teaches us to speak to God, and to hear God when he does us the favour to speak to us. We speak to God when we pray, and when we beg of him those things we stand in need of; God speaks to us when he interiorly inspires us, enlightening our understanding by good thoughts, exciting our will by good motions, and animating us to put them in execution. Upon these two actions, speaking to God with our heart, and hearkening to him when he speaks to us interiorly, depend our salvation, that is, the beginning, progress, and perfecting of our sanctification.

It is for this reason that the Fathers have recommended them to us with so much care. "One while speak to God, (says St. *Jerome*) another while give ear to what God speaks to you." In speaking to God, we beseech him that he will come to us by his grace; in hearkening to him, we open our heart for him to enter there. In speaking to him, we crave his light and grace; in hearkening to him, we receive them, and enclose them in our heart to preserve and practise them.

What honour, *Theotime*, and happiness is this, to be able to speak to God freely and familiarly, and that he should vouchsafe to speak to us, and inspire us with the knowledge of his holy will! a happiness which men know so little how to value, that the greatest part even know not how to use it, although on it their eternal salvation depends. God is always ready to hearken to us, and we speak not to him: he speaks to us, and we know not what it is to hearken to him. What blindness is greater than this, to neglect thus so honourable, so advantageous, and so necessary a favour! If the kings of the earth should give so free an access to their persons, for all who might desire the honour of speaking to them, they must be overwhelmed with the multitude of those who would approach them. God communicates himself with unspeakable bounty, yet is unregarded; few being willing to approach him, or desirous of improving the opportunities he affords us.

Young persons especially profit the least by these celestial favours; they understand not what it is either to speak to God from the bottom of their heart, or to hearken when he speaks interiorly to them, as he frequently does by his holy inspirations; which is the cause why they neglect them, and lose the fruit of them.

Young

Young *Samuel* being asleep, heard a voice calling him by his name; he thought it had been the high priest *Heli's* voice; he hastily rose, and asked him what he wanted. *Heli* sent him back, saying he had not called. The youth having gone three times in this manner, the same voice still awaking him, *Heli* said to him, *Son, I did not call thee*, but without doubt it is God who speaks to thee: *Go, and sleep: and if he shall call thee any more, thou shalt say: speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.* *Samuel* returns, and the same voice having awaked him again, he answered as he was ordered, *speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth\**; and the Lord then informed *Samuel* of the heavy judgments, which were soon to fall upon the high priest and his family, in punishment of sins, that were too enormous to be expiated by the sacrifices they offered.

Do you see, *Theotime*, that God speaks to this young man? but he hears not, because, as the scripture takes notice, he was not then accustomed to that language; but when he had been well instructed, he knew the voice of God, and he learned to hearken to it, and to improve himself infinitely in that divine school.

Thus it frequently happens, that God speaks to you interiorly by so many good motions with which he inspires you, and you let them slip, because you conceive not that they come from God, and that it is he who speaks to you; this is the reason why you lose so many of them, and reap no advantage by them, because as yet you have not learned to hearken to the voice of God, and answer him in a proper manner. Now it is this which we learn by the practice of prayer and meditation.

## A R T I C L E IX.

### *The Method of Meditation.*

**A**FTER showing that you are capable of meditation, dear *Theotime*, and having convinced you of its use; it is now time to shew you how you must perform this holy exercise.

To make you more easily comprehend this method, I shall here take notice of four things.

The first regards the end of meditation. We meditate in order to advance in virtue, which is done by flying vice and pursuing virtue. The end therefore of meditation, is to learn to avoid evil and practise virtue. This constitutes the difference between me-

itation and study of holy things; for we study to become knowing, and we meditate to make ourselves good and virtuous.

The second truth is, that to work out our salvation, and acquire virtue, three things are necessary; to know it, to love, and to practise it.

The sole knowledge does not suffice, except we be inclined with an affection to the good we know; and the love of good serves for nothing, unless we proceed to the execution. This is another difference between meditation and study; for study contents itself with the knowledge of holy things, but meditation proceeds to the love and practice of virtue, as its principal end.

The third truth is, that we cannot of ourselves acquire any of these three things; that is, neither good thoughts for salvation, nor pious affections, nor any good resolutions, except we be inspired by the grace of God. It is a truth which our Lord has taught us, when he said *Without me you can do nothing*\*; and his Apostle after him, when he affirmed, *Not that we are sufficient to think any thing of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*†. And in another place, *It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will*‡.

The fourth is, that although we cannot of ourselves produce any good thought, affection, or resolution for salvation without the grace of God; yet God requires, and will have our co-operation, to give us them, to augment them, to fortify them, and to make us put them in execution. For this reason he admonishes us to *ask, to seek, to knock at the door*§.

This co-operation on our part consists in two actions. 1. In imploring of God with humility and perseverance the grace of good thoughts, pious affections, and holy resolutions for our salvation. 2. To apply our minds to consider attentively the truths of salvation, to draw from thence by the grace of God, suitable thoughts, affections, and resolutions. This is what God would signify unto us, when he admonished us to ask, to meditate, to preserve in our heart the truths of salvation. See Art. VII.

These four maxims being thus settled, it is easy to make you understand the method of meditation, the knowledge whereof depends upon the understanding of three things which follow from those maxims. 1. To know well the end for which we must meditate. 2. To comprehend the acts which must be practised for that end.

3. To

\* Joh. xv. 5. † 2 Cor. iii. 5. ‡ Phil. ii. 13. § Mat. vii. 7.



3. To know the means which ought to be employed to perform well and profitably these acts.

The end of meditation is the sanctification of our soul, by avoiding sin, by advancing in the love of God, and by the practice of Christian virtues. This is the only thing, which ought to be proposed and sought for in this holy exercise.

The acts for arriving at this end are three, which we have spoken of, good thoughts, pious affections, and firm and solid resolutions to practise them.

The means to perform well these actions are prayer, to implore them of God, and the application of our mind to consider the truths which may move us to the love of God, and to the practice of virtue.

From the knowledge of these three things you may easily gather the order and method which is to be observed in meditation, comprehending three parts.

The first serves for preparation, and consists,  
 1. In representing to yourself the end for which you meditate, your advancement in virtue. 2. In placing yourself in the presence of God, and begging of him that you may draw from the subject you are going to meditate on, some pious thoughts, affections, and resolutions for salvation. But this prayer must be made from the bottom of your heart, desiring ardently to obtain what you ask.

The second is meditation itself, which consists in three acts, of which we have frequently spoken, good thoughts, pious affections, and holy resolutions, drawn from the subject on which you meditate. The subject therefore to be meditated on, must be read and looked over before-hand; and after having made your prayer to God, the mind must be applied to consider attentively the sentiments you found expressed on the subject, or others with which God shall inspire you, to draw from thence convenient affections, and resolutions to be put in practice. You must perform these three acts in the presence of God; consider, that from him all good thoughts come, beg them therefore of him very often, and beseech him to speak to your heart. *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth* \*. *I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me* †.

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\* 1 Kings iii. 10. † Psalm lxxxiv 9.



In this exercise is practised that holy conversation by which we speak to God, and hearken to him in our hearts. We speak to him in praying to him, and revolving in his presence the subject on which we meditate. We hearken to him by expecting and receiving his holy inspirations, and entertaining them in our hearts, in order to put them in practice. But this conference of speaking to God, and hearkening to him in our heart, must be performed in repose and silence, as the prophet says, that is, with a quiet and attentive mind, that is, desirous of advancing in virtue.

The third part is the conclusion, consisting of an act of thanksgiving and invocation. We acknowledge in the sight of God, that all good thoughts come from him, and that we are unable to reduce them to practice but by his grace.

*The last part :* of an act of thanksgiving and invocation. We thanksgiving and acknowledge in the sight of God, that all good thoughts come from him, and that we are unable to reduce them to practice but by his grace. petition.

Thus we conclude by these two acts; we give him most humble thanks for those pious sentiments he has bestowed upon us, and beseech him that he will give us the grace to execute the good purposes we have formed.

Thus, *Theotime*, if you consider well the method of meditation, you will find that it consists of two things, prayer and contemplation: this is all which is performed in that holy exercise. It is therefore sometimes called *Meditation*, sometimes *Mental Prayer*. It is upon these two actions that our salvation and sanctification depend. We must meditate, to fill our mind with the knowledge of pious things; but we must pray to be enlightened by God in this knowledge, and that the light we receive therein may inflame us with the love of God. We ought therefore to say often with good King *Ezechias*, *I will cry like a young swallow, I will meditate like a dove*.\*

In fine, *Theotime*, we interiorly perform in this exercise, the same which the Prophet *Elias* did in a visible sacrifice which he offered to God; he prepared the victim and wood to burn it, and afterwards he set himself to prayer, to demand of God that he would be pleased to send fire from heaven, to burn that holocaust. Fire in effect descended, and consumed the whole sacrifice. Thus in this holy exercise of prayer, we prepare our heart to sacrifice it to God, we fill it with the knowledge of pious things, which are apt to inflame it with the love of God; but the celestial fire must descend upon it; that is, God must inflame it with his grace, and enkindle in it the fire of his love; that fire which he himself came to bring into the world, and which he earnestly desires should inflame all our hearts.

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\* Isaiah XXXVIII. 14.

A R T I C L E X.

*Subjects proper for Meditation.*

**A**FTER we have spoken of the method of meditation, we must now speak of the subjects on which you may meditate. We have already said, that the effect of meditation is to know and love the truths necessary to salvation, in order to put them in practice. These truths are to furnish the subjects for meditation. We must contemplate them in order to know them, that knowing them we may love them, and advance in the practice of Christian virtues.

1. We may meditate on the greatness and perfections of God, as, his power, wisdom, goodness, justice, immensity, and eternity; and from thence draw such affections as we shall specify hereafter.

2. The favours of God towards men; as creation, preservation, redemption, vocation to Christianity, the grace of justification, the particular benefits we find we have received from him.

3. The nativity, the life, the actions, the miracles, the passion, the death, the resurrection, the ascension of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, with all his divine words, are excellent and copious subjects of meditation.

4. The four last things of man; that is, his death, judgment, heaven, hell.

5. Sin in general.

6. Sins or vices in particular; as pride, impurity, intemperance, anger, covetousness, envy, and others.

7. The Christian virtues opposite to these vices; the love of God, the love of our neighbour, humility, chastity, meekness, patience, and others.

In fine, we may meditate upon faith, upon the articles of the creed, upon hope, and upon every petition of the Lord's Prayer, upon charity, and at the same time upon the commandments of God, all which have relation to charity.

In the first subjects, which are the perfections of God, we meditate upon their greatness, which may be learnt by books which treat of them; and we draw from thence suitable affections, as admiration, respect, submission, fear, hope, love.

*Manner of drawing affections from these subjects.*

In the benefits of God, we consider their greatness by the excellence of the thing which is given, by the greatness of him who gives it, and bestows favours on us out of his pure goodness, without having any need of us: by the meanness of him who receives the benefits, that is, of ourselves; from whence we examine the good or ill use we have made of them, the ingratitude with which we have received them, the good use we are bound to make of them for the future. From these considerations, what confusion, sorrow, repentance of what is past, and good resolutions for the time to come, must arise?

In the life and actions of our Lord, we consider the circumstances which render them admirable, the virtues he practised, his charity, humility, patience, wisdom. From whence we draw powerful motives of love, acknowledgment, and imitation of that divine master, whose example confirmed his doctrine.

In the four last things, by looking on them attentively, and as near at hand, we learn to know them, to fear them, and to prepare ourselves for them in time by a holy life. This is a very profitable and efficacious meditation, when it is often performed, and with a serious application. *Remember, says the wise man, thy last end, and thou shalt never sin\*.*

As to sin in general, there are two important considerations, which comprehend all the rest, to be reflected on. The first is, the injury sin offers to God; the second is, the prejudice and hurt it brings to the soul of him who commits it.

The greatness and enormity of the injury sin offers to God, may be gathered from the infinite majesty of him who is offended, and the baseness and unworthiness of him who offends, who is a wretched creature rebelling against his creator; from the enormous ingratitude he is guilty of against his benefactor; from the hatred God bears to sin; from the horrid punishments he inflicted for its sake upon Angels in heaven, upon men on earth, and still heaps upon the damned in hell, and will heap for all eternity; in a word, from the atonement he exacted from his own Son, who alone was able to satisfy the divine justice for the infinite injury sin had done to God. None but God himself, clothed in our nature, was capable of repairing the injury, by making a sacrifice equal to all our crimes.

The damage sin brings to the soul consists in this, that it miserably robs her of the grace of God, it deprives her of the right  
she

\* Eccli. vii. 40.

she had to paradise; it makes her a slave of the Devil, and subject to eternal damnation.

All these things seriously considered, excite in the soul a hatred and detestation of sin, a sorrow and regret for having committed it, an ardent will to do penance for it, and a constant resolution for the future to fly from that monster, and, by serving God faithfully, to avoid that greatest of all misfortunes.

As to vices, we ponder the reasons and motives for avoiding them, which are many and most effectual; we endeavour to prevail on the mind to fly from them entirely, and to confirm the resolution of shunning them; from whence we meditate on the means to put them in practice.

As for virtues, we examine the motives which render them amiable, we stir up ourselves to love and embrace them, we seek the means to acquire them, foresee the obstacles which may occur, the occasions we shall have of practising them, and so of other subjects.

## A R T I C L E    XI.

*Other easy and profitable Subjects of Meditation.*

**Y**OU will find all the former subjects in diverse books of meditation, which were made expressly for that intent; but to facilitate yet more the use of this holy exercise, there is a way which seems to me best accommodated to that purpose, and which may be very beneficial.

It is to take a book of devotion, and to make use of each chapter for the matter of one or more meditations. You may profitably employ in this, *the imitation of Christ; the sinners guide and memorial of a christian life; the introduction of a devout life,* and many other good books. *How to meditate on a book of devotion.*

You may make use of this book of *the instruction of youth*, and easily gather from thence much profit. There is scarce any chapter which contains not the acts of meditation, that is, considerations upon the subject, and afterwards affections and resolutions drawn from thence; or at least it is easy to draw them from the considerations which are there treated.

In order to this, when you take a chapter to meditate on, read it first with attention, make choice of the principal considerations you will meditate on, and afterwards having placed yourself in the presence



presence of God, and begged of him the light of his grace, revolve in your mind these considerations, read them, and weigh them attentively; then draw from thence affections agreeable to the matter, and form necessary resolutions; in fine, having well digested those affections and resolutions in your soul, and being sufficiently confirmed in them, beg of God the grace to retain and practise them. This is a manner of meditation which seems easy, and which may be very profitable.

To facilitate this yet more, I will set down some examples.

*Meditation exemplified from this book.*

If you desire to meditate on the first chapter of this book, which is, of the end for which man is created; read attentively the whole chapter, you will find in it three reflections upon man, or upon yourself, what you are, who made you what you are, and for what end he made you. You will there learn, that this end is nothing less than God himself, who would give himself to you to be possessed: and this not for a short time, but for all eternity. You will see there, how great this end is, how amiable, and how ardently you ought to desire it. These considerations will stir you up to acknowledge on the one side, the immense goodness of God towards you; and on the other, the strange blindness of men, and your own also, who think so little on so noble and blessed an end, and put yourself often in danger of losing it without recovery. You will afterwards find reflections to make on yourself, as well for what is past as for the future, and the resolutions you ought to make upon so important a subject.

In the second chapter, which treats of our vocation to Christianity, you will find how much this vast benefit of God obliges you to serve him. 1. By the greatness of this grace, upon which you will observe three reflections, which will furnish you wherewith to make one or many very profitable meditations: 2. By the great obligation of Christianity, which being well considered, will effectually excite you to comply with it as you ought.

Continuing thus through every chapter of the first part, you will find in them wherewith to entertain your mind profitably in the presence of God, and to stir yourself up to serve him faithfully, and to form strenuous resolutions.

In the second part you will take notice of the means which are necessary for you to attain virtue. There is none of them but will furnish you with matter whereon to meditate, and raise in you  
powerful

powerful considerations to persuade you to love them, and put them in practice. Meditate on them in this spirit, that is, with a view to bring yourself to the practice of the means, and dwell on this subject until such time as you find in yourself the effect of this persuasion.

The third part treats of the obstacles to salvation, that is, of vices which you ought to avoid. In each of them you will find, first, the motives which oblige you to fly from them, and consequently the means you must use for that end. Read both of them attentively upon each obstacle, the first, to instruct you and convince your mind, the second, to put them in practice. Meditate on them in the presence of God, with design to advantage yourself by them. Observe therein the order we have given, and your endeavours will be crowned with success.

You will find the same order in the fourth part, which treats of virtues necessary for young people. The motives are there mentioned, and afterwards the means to acquire them. If you read them with ever so little attention, you will find that there is no subject or matter of meditation more easy, as it is one of the most useful and necessary.

The last part, which treats of the choice of a state of life, will furnish matter whereon to meditate, when you are on the point of that deliberation. You will there find the importance of the choice, the faults you must avoid therein, the means you must employ, diverse considerations upon each state, and other things of consequence. All this will afford matter of meditation, both profitable and necessary.

In the second volume, you may, in like manner, meditate on *Penance*, the *Holy Communion*, and *Prayer*.

## A R T I C L E XII.

### *The Practice of Meditation.*

**T**O reduce into practice all that we have said of meditation, see here what you must do. First, as the morning is the most proper time for exercises of the mind, choose that time for meditating in, following the advice of the wise man, who says: *The just man will give his heart to resort early to the Lord, that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the most high\**. Many other passages of scripture recommend morning prayer.

Read

\* Eccli. xxxix. 6.

Read over night the subject you design to meditate on. The next morning after you have adored almighty God, and offered to him your usual prayers, read again the same matter. Afterwards casting yourself on your knees in the presence of God, beg of him the grace to perform well this meditation, and to learn therein, and keep in mind some important truths for your salvation,

Present yourself to him as a blind man, who desires to have his sight restored. *Lord that I may see\**. Grant, O Lord, that I may see thy holy truths. *O my God enlighten my darkness†*. Clear, O God, the darkness of my soul. *Open thou my eyes; and I will consider the wonderful things of thy law‡*. Open my interior eyes, that I may attentively consider the wonders that are included in thy holy law. Or as a poor man, who demands of God a morsel of bread for the nourishment of his soul. *Give us this day our daily bread§*. Give me, O God, by thy grace, a little of that celestial bread which thou distributeest to thy children. *Look thou upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor||*. Cast thy eyes upon me, and have mercy on my misery, because I am a poor forsaken man, incapable of having of myself any good thought, except it come from thy grace. Or as a sick man, who seeks remedies for his soul. *Have mercy on me, O Lord, my soul is grievously troubled by a Devil¶*. Have pity, O God, on my soul, which is persecuted by the enemies of her salvation. Make use of some of these, or such like prayers.

Afterwards apply your mind to consider the subject you are to meditate on; choose two or three of those considerations which you find in your book, fix your thought upon each, one after another; to weigh them, to convince yourself of them, and to keep them in your mind.

But here, endeavour above all to excite your heart and affection, to love, to embrace, and to practise the truths you meditate on; for this is the fruit and end of meditation. We meditate not only to understand what is good, but to love it, and put it in execution; we seek not after science, but virtue.

For this reason you must pause longer upon the affections and resolutions than upon the considerations; you must extend them, entertain them, and relish them at leisure. For example, it does not

\* Luke xviii. 41. † Ps. xvii. 29. ‡ Ps. cxviii. 18. § Luke xi. 3.  
|| Ps. xxiv. 16. ¶ Mat. xv. 22.



not suffice to consider in meditation how amiable God is, to represent the reasons for it, as his goodness, his perfections, his benefits; but after having made these considerations, you must descend to the affections arising from thence, to love him actually, and say from your heart, It is true, O God, that thou art infinitely amiable, and that there are infinite reasons for loving thee, why should I not then embrace them? Why shall I be so obdurate, so ungrateful, such an enemy to myself as not to love thee? O God, how wretched is he who loves thee not! And how miserable was I when I loved thee not, and instead of it was wedded to my passions and pleasures! I have loved thee too late, O infinite goodness! I have loved thee too late! But now I will love thee entirely; nothing shall separate me from thy love, from thy service, from thy obedience.

It is chiefly in these affections, that God speaks to the heart by the good purposes he inspires it with: it is there, finding the soul in a holy solitude, and thinking on nothing but him, he is pleased to speak to her interiorly, and replenish her with his love. *I will lead her, says he, into the wilderness; and I will speak to her heart\**. There it is good, as the Prophet says, *to wait with silence for the salvation of God†*; and to say to him with young Samuel, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth‡*. Let not men now talk to me, let not books instruct me at this time; but thou, O Lord, do me the favour to speak interiorly to me, and touch my heart, and fill it with thy love. See the *Imitation of Christ§*.

Continue a while in this state, and in these pious affections which God shall bestow upon you, stirring them up, and entertaining them the best you can. Diversify them as the different subjects require. Applying them one while to the hatred of sin, if the subject be sin in general, or any particular vice; to the fear of God and his judgments; another while to a desire to serve God, to become virtuous, to fly the occasions of sin, and strongly resist temptations; but most frequently to the love of God, to an affection for Christian virtues, humility, chastity, temperance, and other pious and wholesome affections, as the matter of your meditation shall direct.

But chiefly, forget not to come to good resolutions; for it would be offering a great injury to God, to have received from him good motions, and not to put them in execution. Wherefore you must always conclude your meditation with firm resolutions to practise what

\* Osee ii. 14. † Lam. iii. 26. ‡ 1 Kings iii. 10. § Lib. 3. cap. 2.



what God has inspired in prayer. But this resolution must be strong and efficacious, let it therefore be followed by its effect; and that it may be such, read and practise the third and fourth advice, which you will find in the following article.

Finish your prayer, by giving thanks to God for the good thoughts and motions he has bestowed upon you, humbly begging of him the grace to put them in practice; foresee the occasions you may have to practise them, that you may be mindful of them.

You may perform this exercise in the space of half an hour or so; that time is not too long for an action of such importance, where you treat with God concerning your salvation, and wherein God does you the honour to hearken to you, and communicate himself to you with so much bounty.

As for the days of meditation, it would be a great blessing, if you could perform it every day: if not endeavour to perform it at least every *Sunday* and *Holyday*, on the days of confession and communion, and also on some days before to prepare yourself for it, and some days after to preserve the fruit of it; I moreover recommend it, on the days wherein you shall find yourself moved with temptations, that in this exercise you may find arms to defend yourself; according to that remarkable admonition of our Lord, *Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*\*.

Make choice of a convenient place for meditation, that is removed from noise, and wherein you may be alone as much as possible, that you may thereby be less exposed to distractions, and have more liberty to apply your mind and heart to God.

### A R T I C L E XIII.

#### *General advice concerning Meditation.*

**B**EFORE the finishing of this treatise, there remains some advice to be given you, to obviate the difficulties which occur in this holy exercise, and to make it solidly advantageous to you.

The first is, that you diligently take care not to permit your mind to be prepossessed with any false opinion against meditation, as to conceive that you are not capable of meditating, or that it is too much trouble, not necessary, or the like.

This is the first obstacle the Devil will put in your way to divert you entirely from this exercise; but we have already

\* Mat. xxvi. 41.

already taken notice of this impediment, and have discovered the folly of that illusion, in the first eight articles; wherefore read them attentively. Especially as to your capacity, remember that it is not wit, nor sublime studies, which qualify you for meditating, but humility and the knowledge of your own inability to design or perform good actions, and a great desire to advance in virtue. These are the dispositions which render you capable of meditating, or rather of receiving the lights and motions of divine grace, which are the things we seek in meditation, and not our own imaginations.

The second advice is, not to be dismayed with the difficulties you may find in this exercise, as the trouble to apply your mind, distractions, disgust, and the like.

*2d Advice.*

*Be not dismayed with difficulties, which may occur in this exercise.*

1. Represent to yourself that good things are not acquired without pains. What difficulties do we meet with in studies, and other exercises of human life, yet these do not make us desist?

2. Consider that all beginnings are difficult, and that by practice they are overcome, especially by the grace of God, which is the first mover to all good things, but particularly in this action, where it is the first and principal support.

3. Make these distractions serve for your meditation, and proceed in this manner. Humble yourself in the sight of God, because you cannot keep your mind attentive: acknowledge that it is through your fault; that your sins are the cause; that this springs from your lightness, and from too great an inclination to the vanities and pleasures of the world. Take from thence occasion to lament your sins, to implore pardon of God for them, to purpose to fly from them for the future, to correct the levity of your mind, and to redress your disorderly affections.

4. Among all these distractions, suppose yourself to be as a beggar at the gate of God, from whom you beg an alms. Does a beggar esteem himself repulsed, because he is not hearkened to at his first request? He continues soliciting, he waits, he comes again. Act you in that manner, persevere, humbly begging of God a good thought for your salvation. Although you should spend all the time of your meditation in this request, you will have done a great deal. Call to mind that excellent sentence of St. *Augustine* \*, who says, that "When God does not presently

"grant

\* Serm. 5. de Verb. Dom.

"grant the petition we desire, it is not because he refuses us, but because he would have us set such a value on his favours as they deserve; it being certain, that we esteem more the things obtained with much trouble, and make less account of those acquired without pains." For this reason he adds, "Ask, seek, urge; God reserves the favour to grant it at the end, although he would not consent to it at the first, that you might learn to solicit for great things with an ardent desire."

5. On these occasions behave yourself like the poor *Cananean*, who gained by a wonderful patience the favour which the Son of God had refused her. This afflicted woman came, and cast herself at the feet of our Lord, to obtain the cure of her daughter tormented with an evil spirit. He passes on his way without answering her one word. She addresses herself to the Apostles, who intercede for her, but to no purpose. Seeing herself thus rejected she advances, and presents herself to him again with greater earnestness than before, O Lord, assist me! He answers roughly, *It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs* \*. An answer sufficient to discourage the greatest patience. She, instead of being disheartened by it, takes advantage from his words, and makes use of them to obtain the effect of her prayer: Ah Lord! pardon me if I tell you, that sometimes bread is given to the dogs, for at least they are permitted to eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table: nor do I request any thing more than the remainder of the favours you shew your children. Our Lord was so well pleased with the faith, humility and patience of this afflicted person, that praising her highly, he said to her, *O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt* †.

Imitate in your prayer this admirable example, and still when you beg of God any grace for your salvation, although God answers you not by some good thoughts, continue intreating, *Lord help me* ‡. Have recourse to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin *Mary*, and of the saints, as the *Cananean* had to that of the Apostles. If, this coldness continuing, your conscience tell you, that your sins are the cause, and that they render you unworthy of the favours you request; acknowledge humbly the truth, and declaring that it is so, say from your heart as the *Cananean*, It is true, O God, it is not reasonable that thou shouldest give the bread of thy children to dogs, that is, to sinners such as I am; but at least, as the crumbs of bread which fall from the table are allowed to the dogs, deny

\* Mat. xv. 26. † Mat. xv. 28. ‡ Mat. xv. 25.



deny me not those which fall from thine ; grant me some small remainder of those abundant graces which thou pourest upon those who faithfully serve thee. If you persevere thus, God will grant your petition, and recompense your faith, your humility, and your patience. And although he should not give you any sentiments proper to the subject upon which you meditate, yet that patience, that humility, that stedfast faith which you exercise, will be more pleasing to him than any thing else, and more profitable to you, and this will be the best fruit of your prayer. Thus, *Theotime*, you will lose nothing, though God should seem to refuse the good thoughts you ask of him. This denial will be abundantly recompensed by the virtues you practise on the occasion ; for those are God's gifts : thus it may be truly said, that in seeking God at one time, you will find him at another ; and you will experience the truth of that excellent observation made by the great St. Bernard, " That among all the things we seek for, only God is never sought for in vain, even when we imagine we cannot find him \*."

The third advice is, That in every meditation you still be mindful of the end for which you meditate, which is the sanctification of your soul, and to make you truly virtuous in the sight of God ; so that the meditation by which you do not advance in virtue, is not meditation nor prayer, but a speculative study, which is sometimes more prejudicial than profitable.

*3d Advice.*

*Reflect on the end for which you meditate.*

The meditation which is performed without a view to this end, is attended with an infinite number of most dangerous defects. It makes us stop at the thoughts, and not proceed to affections ; at curious speculations, not solid ; at those which delight the mind, and not at those which move the heart. If we pass to affections, it is to those which are found most agreeable, and not those which are most necessary, such as the hatred of sin, the desire of mortifying our passions, and correcting our vices. We content ourselves with the affection, and omit the resolutions ; and if we proceed to resolutions, we content ourselves with general ones, without descending to particulars. For example, we say, I would be humble, chaste, temperate ; but we do not say, I will be humble on this or that occasion ; I will obey when I shall be commanded ; I will acknowledge my fault when I shall be reprehended, and other like ; I will be chaste by resisting temptations,

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\* L. 5. de Consideratione c. n.



through such and such means; I will avoid such occasions, which are dangerous; I will shun idleness, &c. And if we come to some particular resolutions, we make them but faintly, and not firmly and vigorously; from whence it comes to pass that we never accomplish them, and so they are as unprofitable as if they were not made at all.

All these faults in meditation arise from our not seriously proposing to ourselves the sanctification of our soul, by the solid practice of virtue.

From hence it comes, that this manner of meditation prejudices more than it profits, because it is apt to give those who act thus, a very good opinion of themselves, a contempt of others, and a confidence in their own merits: it makes them much addicted to their own judgment and will, and believe they are saints by meditating on holy things, although they practise them not; which is a very great mischief, not only to them, but to others, who take from thence an occasion to blame meditation and devotion, which are not the cause of these disorders, but the ill use these persons make of them.

For this reason, *Theotime*, when you apply yourself to this holy exercise, seriously propose virtue as its end; and believe that meditation unprofitable, from which you depart without a particular resolution of correcting yourself, and of loving God more than you have yet done.

But it is not sufficient to refer meditation to the practice of virtue, we must also be careful to refer it to the practice of the most solid virtues, as faith, humility, the love of God and our neighbour, chastity, temperance, and others, especially those which are most necessary, in the present state wherein we find ourselves, and of which we stand most frequently in need.

This advice is one of the most important which can be given in this matter; for to what purpose is it to propose to ourselves in meditation fair and apparent virtues, and in the mean time omit the more solid, which are the groundwork and foundation of all others, and which making less shew, are notwithstanding more necessary? To what end, for example, do we propose to ourselves to be very liberal to the poor, if we had it in our power; to suffer great persecutions for God's sake, if they should befall us; with other like things, and neglect the virtues we stand in present want of,

of, as chastity, humility, meekness towards our neighbour, or those we have every day occasion to practise, as the mortifying of our passions, restraining of our anger, suffering at the hands of others, and obedience to our superiors?

In a word, meditation is a means of sanctifying our souls. This sanctification consists in moderating our passions, correcting our vices, and by consequence, in acquiring the contrary virtues: it ought therefore to be necessarily referred to that end, and to produce that effect; otherwise it is not a meditation, but a mere illusion: and those who employ it thus, abuse the most holy and wholesome thing, which they render unprofitable to themselves, and contemptible to others.

Act not in this manner, *Theotime*; meditate in order to sanctify your soul, to mortify your passions, to correct the vices which reign in you, to practise true and solid virtues, and those you stand most in need of in your present state.

This is what I had to propose to you upon this subject of meditation. To conclude, I have but two words to say to you, *Read and practise*. *Conclusion.* Read, to instruct yourself in a thing which yet you know not, to convince yourself that meditation is not so difficult as you might conceive it, but that you may practise it, and that it may be very beneficial to you. Read, to learn the method of it, and practise the same. But content not yourself with the reading, proceed to the practice and exercise of so pious a thing. Try what you can do therein, or rather what God will give you the grace to perform: be assured his assistance will be great, if you approach him with a sincere intention to please him, and to learn in that divine school the truths of your salvation, and to practise them faithfully. Be not dismayed at the difficulties; be faithful and perseverant, and God will bestow upon you the means of surmounting them. Call to mind that sentence of the prophet, *That the Lord is good to them that hope in him, to the soul that seeketh him\**. Seek after him in your prayers and meditations, and you will find him, if you search faithfully. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you†*. O taste, *Theotime*, and see that the Lord is sweet‡, in this pious exercise, and you will find by experience, and in effect, the truth of that sentence of the divine wisdom: *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth*

\* Lam. iii. 25. † Mat. vii. 7. ‡ Ps. xxxiii. 9.

*watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doort.  
He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from  
the Lord\*.*

\* Prov. viii. 34, 35.



F I N I S.



## Errors of the Press.

### V O L. I.

Page 5, Line 4, *read* youth, if—*ibid.* l. 23, *r.* the power—p. 6, l. 11, *r.* poured—*ib.* l. 16, *r.* 3. He—p. 12 in margin, *r.* Job xxix. 2.—p. 40, l. 11, *r.* dense obscurity—p. 50, in margin, for xxii, *r.* 22—p. 77, in margin, *r.* Psalm cxviii. 73—p. 84, l. 27, in margin, dele *the whole human race*—p. 99, l. 10, for *The book*, &c. *r.* The holy scripture in many places, but chiefly in the book—p. 152, l. 23, dele *nor*—p. 207, l. 10, *r.* young persons engage—p. 208, l. 9, *r.* important an.

### V O L. II.

Page 8, Line 29, *read laugh at*—p. 62, l. last but one, for *for*, *r.* yet—p. 133, l. 2, *r.* they would—p. 168, l. 5, *r.* which are duly proposed—p. 186, l. 21, *r.* spiritual blindness—p. 207, l. 4, *r.* that blessed—p. 216, in margin, *r.* § S. Ber. *ibid.*—p. 219, l. 20, *r.* thy humanity.—p. 233, l. 12, *r.* repent of our sins—p. 246, l. 18, *r.* at least.



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